



# THE INDEPENDENT

Nº 3,293

SATURDAY 10 MAY 1997

WEATHER: Sunshine and showers

(R65p) 60p

**JULIA SAWALHA**  
Too gorgeous  
to be true  
the long weekend



**TONY BANKS**  
'No Royal box  
for me, mate'  
Back page sport



**JULIE WALTERS**  
Loud, boozy,  
outrageous  
The eye



## Blair shuts down the Commons bearpit

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

Tony Blair yesterday announced that he was ending the twice-weekly "Punch and Judy Show" at Prime Minister's Question Time as part of his efforts to breathe fresh air into the House of Commons.

The Prime Minister announced that he was replacing the twice-weekly 15-minute sessions, which had been criticised for encouraging "yah-boo, sound-bite politics". From 21 May, he will face questions once a week for half an hour.

Forcing the Prime Minister to answer questions about his whereabouts every Tuesday and Thursday has no place in the presidential style of the Blair administration. It is seen as a quaint exercise by other Western leaders, including President Bill Clinton, who announced that he will be visiting Downing Street next week to meet the Prime Minister for the first time since the election.

But the decision to do away with the tradition was attacked by John Major, who spent six years answering questions from Mr Blair and his predecessor, Neil Kinnock, and may have relished his chance to get his own back. "It is true that PMQs is a burden to any Prime Minister. But that is the point of it. It makes the Prime Minister directly accountable to Parliament. The size of the government's majority in the House at present makes that accountability more important and not less," he said.

Mr Blair was braced for an outcry after informing Mr Major and other party leaders, including Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, who used a Punch and Judy show to launch his party's election campaign.

Baroness Thatcher and Mr Major had to prepare meticulously for unexpected questions, taking up precious hours of briefing. The "open question" enabling backbenchers to try to catch out the Prime Minister will stay, for the time being, but



Tony Blair: Once a week

Questions and answers

Prime Ministers Questions has occupied a central place in Commons business for more than 35 years. The 15-minute exchange, which begins just after Big Ben strikes 3.15 on a Tuesday and Thursday, is renowned around the world for its rowdy confrontational abrasiveness.

It began in its current form in 1961, when it was introduced by Harold Macmillan.

In no other democracy except Canada does the head of Government have to appear so regularly in Parliament to answer questions and reply to criticism. On seeing Prime Minister's Questions former US president George Bush commented: "I count my blessings for the fact that I don't have to go into that pit that John Major stands in, nose to nose with the Opposition all yelling at each other."

The twice-weekly scrap has a cult television following in the Netherlands.

There are moves to end that too. A new special select committee will be set up to review further changes to Prime Minister's Questions, and Downing Street sources confirmed that the Government will be suggesting that the "open question" should go.

That could restrict MPs to raising issues related to the questions on the Commons order paper, and may be resisted more fiercely than ending the

twice-weekly sessions which have made Prime Minister's Question Time an unlikely hit on cable television in the United States.

A more sedate session of questions may lose viewers, but Mr Blair is said to have found widespread distaste for the twice-weekly clashes on the doorsteps campaigning in the election. "The media coverage of it has changed the nature of the event itself. He felt that the public were fed up with the relentless, endless slanging match. Blair slugging off Major and Major slugging off Blair," said a Downing Street source.

"It is not very edifying and hopefully, this will change the nature of the debate."

Mr Ashdown, who was regularly jeered by Tory and Labour backbenchers every time he entered the fray in Prime Minister's Questions in the last Parliament, supported Mr Blair's move to make the sessions more serious, and more sustained in their questioning.

But the contestants for the Tory party leadership are loathe to give up their chance to show they can beat Mr Blair across the despatch box.

Michael Howard, the former home secretary, said: "I have no problem with looking again at the format of PMQs, but it is wrong to cut it down to once a week. Requiring the PM to answer to the House of Commons twice a week is good for democracy."

The Prime Minister this week showed his anxiety to enforce a culture change in government by telling the Cabinet to "call me Tony". He will also sweep away the practice in Prime Minister's Questions of repeating the set reply to questions about his duties for the day.

This resulted in Mr Major having to repeat five or six times each session the words, "I refer the Hon Member to the reply I gave earlier..." Mr Blair believes this procedure is time-wasting and baffling to the public.

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Cherie says she loves me, but I'm not so sure



by Humphrey the Downing Street Cat

I can only go by what I read in the newspapers, which is that Cherie Blair thinks I stink, harbour vile diseases and pee on the duvets. Yes, the press report merely said Cherie thought cats were "unhygienic" but we all know what that means. See, the world divides into cat-baters and cat-lovers. Cat lovers prize our independence, killer instincts and unashamed enjoyment of physical pleasure - yes, pleasure! All the fashionable, politically incorrect pleasures, from the crunch of small hot bones, to the warmth of a roaring fire and the knowledge that one is going to stay asleep all damned day, to - well, let's face it, loud and promiscuous sex in the open air.

Are the Blairs an open-air sex family? I think not. I have long harboured doubts about Labour. I think they're keener on the soft, wet, endlessly grateful dependency culture of the average labourer. They have no respect for hunting. It's all "oh, the

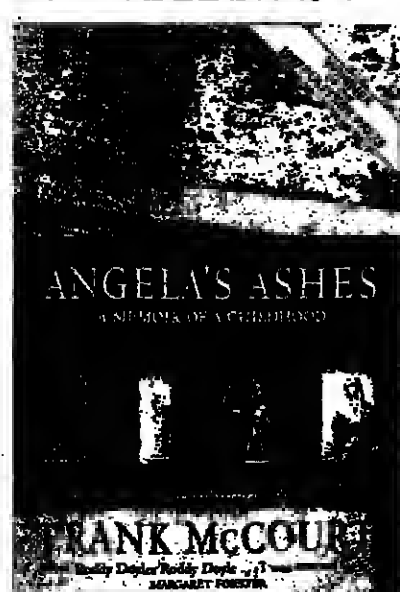
poor fox" and "oh the poor wee mouse". Pahl! And this lot are puritans to boot. "Off welfare and into work", eh? Welfare is my lifestyle, Cherie darling. Family values? A blatant attack on the sexually liberated lifestyle which the feline community has enjoyed for generations. Over-indulgence? They've made "fat cats" hate figures for half the nation. I'm a professional. They say "pose with the nice lady, Humphrey" and - OK, Peter, fellow feline - I'll pose. It goes with the job. But frankly, they've got a lot of ear-scratching, cossetting and fine dinners to come before they buy my trust. If not... well, these guys better remember: around these parts, Sir Humphrey always wins.

Photograph: Rebecca Naden

## WINNER OF THE 1997 PULITZER PRIZE

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### QUICKLY

**Venice in peril**  
Police scaled the campanile of St Mark's and arrested eight men who had commandeered a vaporetto, loaded a home-made armoured car on board and ordered the pilot to take them to the Piazza, where they climbed the belltower, unfurled a Venetian flag and claimed to be separatists seeking to liberate Venice from the colonialist yoke of Rome. Page 3

**Blair beef strategy**  
Tony Blair is working on a strategy for lifting the European ban on British exports of beef, which could be the first prize to be won from a closer relationship with Britain's European partners. Page 6

**Rome not amused**  
Rome is miffed by Britain's "triangle" with France and Germany. Page 12



Jason Bennett  
Crime Correspondent

In what must be the longest running "whodunnit" of all time, new evidence has emerged into the mysterious death, 3,000 years ago, of King Tutankhamun. The combined skills of a former Scotland Yard detective and a medical expert suggest that the boy pharaoh may have been murdered by one of his top officials or a general.

Ever since Tutankhamun, who died at the age of nine in 1352BC, was discovered buried in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt 1922 there has been intense speculation about his demise.

## Tutankhamun's killer is revealed: it was the general by the pyramid

Now the magazine *MAG* - Museums and Galleries - has brought together a "historic murder squad" to investigate the case. Their findings, published on Monday, suggest that foul play ended the young king's life. Analysis of X-rays of Tutankhamun's skull by Professor Ian Isherwood, a retired neuro-radiologist with 33 years experience, revealed a small depressed fracture in the back of the skull. Professor Isherwood believes the injury was probably caused by a blow to the head which most likely took place before his death.

"During mummification you often get [this sort of injury] in limbs but not in the skull," he

said yesterday. He added: "It doesn't imply mal-intent, unless there's circumstantial evidence to support it."

So the question is whether there was anyone with a motive.

In steps Graham Melvin, a former detective inspector with the Metropolitan police. His prime suspects are Ay, the king's vizier, and the head of the army, General Horemheb. "You would need two. If Ay was acting alone, wouldn't Horemheb have been angry with him for murdering his king? Anyway, Ay would have needed the army's support."

Further circumstantial evidence is that Ay took over Tutankhamun's throne and

married the dead king's widow. Following Ay's death Horemheb took power and destroyed the young Pharaoh's monuments. The name of Tutankhamun was removed from the list of kings.

Mr Melvin said: "It wasn't about power per se. If it had been about power, why wait. They'd have bumped him off long ago."

"It was about the greater glory of the country. Ay was old. They agreed, on a handshake, that he'd take over, and Horemheb knew when Ay was dead, he could do as he liked."

Despite this new inquiry and fresh list of suspects, no charges are expected.



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## news

## significant shorts

## Blunkett unveils unit to raise school standards

A new Government unit for driving up school standards yesterday emerged as a powerful coordinating body, connecting central government, schools, local authorities and a range of key education agencies.

The Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, said the Standards and Effectiveness Unit would be charged with driving forward Government policy to lift standards in all schools and, in particular, hitting literacy and numeracy targets for primary-age children.

The unit will be overseen by the School Standards Minister, Stephen Byers, and headed by Professor Michael Barber, former Dean of New Initiatives at London University's Institute of Education.

It will act as an advisory body to the Secretary of State over the establishment of a mechanism for consulting teachers and other educational partners on policy issues – a step much requested by education practitioners.

Failing schools will also find themselves under the unit's watchful eye, as it advises the Secretary of State on ways to improve weak or failing institutions. Mr Byers yesterday received a report on all 281 of the country's failing schools for consideration this weekend, and is expected to announce action on the issue within the next fortnight.

Lucy Ward

## Dublin demands inquiry into killing

Dublin yesterday called for a high-level investigation into circumstances surrounding the beating to death of a Catholic man by loyalists in Portadown, amid allegations that police ignored pleas to come to the man's assistance.

Robert Hamill, a 25-year-old father of two, died in hospital on Thursday night, two weeks after suffering serious head injuries in an attack as he left a function at Portadown's St Patrick's Hall. Relatives claimed the loyalists called him "a Fenian bastard" and "danced on his head".

Members of Mr Hamill's family told Irish radio that police in a RUC car, parked close to the scene of the attack, had ignored pleas to come to his aid and failed to give any medical help.

Rosemary Nelson, solicitor for the Hamill family, confirmed a writ had been served on the RUC seeking damages for negligence, and said the circumstances of the attack were "very sinister".

## Former BBC chief Wenham dies



Broadcaster Brian Wenham, (left) who as BBC2 controller nurtured *Not The Nine O'Clock News*, snooker and opera coverage, has died, it was disclosed yesterday. The former BBC TV director of programmes and BBC Radio managing director died suddenly in London on Thursday night. He was 60.

"He will be greatly missed," said BBC broadcast chief executive Will Wyatt.

Wenham was BBC2's controller from 1978 to 1983 and had a distinguished broadcasting career at both ITN and BBC. He leaves a wife, Elizabeth, and two daughters.

## Julie Ward arrests 'within weeks'

Detectives believe they are closing in on the killers of Julie Ward, whose mutilated body was found eight years ago in Kenya's Masai Mara game park. Julie's father, John Ward, 63, who has devoted himself to bringing the culprits to justice, said yesterday he expected arrests to be made in the next few weeks.

Mr Ward, a botanist from Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, said the jigsaw was finally beginning to piece together and there was strong evidence that his 28-year-old daughter had been murdered by two employees of a camping ground in the Masai Mara.

"The jigsaw is now looking much clearer than it ever has. We believe there were two people primarily responsible and a third who helped clear up the mess."

## 'Standard' faces contempt action

The High Court yesterday gave the go-ahead for contempt proceedings to be brought against the London *Evening Standard* over publication of a story which led to the trial of six alleged Whitmoor prison escapees being abandoned.

The Attorney-General, John Morris QC, in a case initiated by his predecessor Sir Nicholas Lyell, was granted leave to apply for court orders punishing Associated Newspapers, *Standard* editor Max Hastings and journalist Mark Honigsbaum.

The story, headlined "Alcatraz-on-Thames", was published on 22 January and included photographs of three of the trial defendants with captions referring to their IRA connections and the terrorist nature of the convictions for which they were serving time.

Next day, the Woolwich Crown Court trial was permanently "stayed" by Mr Justice Maurice Kay, who had ruled a week earlier that no reference to such matters should be made during the hearing.

## people



Nicoletta Mantovani and Luciano Pavarotti in London yesterday (Photograph: David Rose)

## Pavarotti flies in to ring down Opera House curtain

Luciano Pavarotti, the great Italian tenor, flew into Britain yesterday for his last appearance at the Royal Opera House before it closes for redevelopment.

The opera star and his young girlfriend, Nicoletta Mantovani, are paying a flying visit for tomorrow's sell-out performance at Covent Garden, which will be his only solo recital in London this season.

The event will be his first recital at the Royal Opera House in eight years. His last appearance on stage was in Verdi's opera *Un Ballo in Maschera* in 1995.

A Covent Garden spokeswoman said: "It is completely sold out and has been virtually since we opened [bookings]. It is a rare treat."

The world's most famous tenor will perform a programme which includes music by Beethoven, Scarlatti, Schubert and Bizet. There will be operatic arias from Puccini's *Il Tost* and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* – but no singing of what has become his signature tune, *Nessun Dorma*.

He performed the same programme at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in January.

The recital is part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the reopening of the opera house after the Second World War and comes two months before it closes for the £214m redevelopment plan.

The theatre is scheduled to reopen in December 1998, which may well make this Pavarotti's last Covent Garden performance of the century.

His debut there was as Rodolfo in *La Bohème* in 1964. For his first recital, in 1978, he was accompanied on the piano by Leone Magiera, as he will be again tomorrow.

Pavarotti arrived at the Hyde Park Hotel yesterday, lunchtime with 27-year-old Miss Mantovani. She was the singer's secretary, but moved into his Italian home two years ago when he left his wife of 36 years.

She immediately put him on a strict diet to reduce his legendary bulk by several stones, and has been credited with huge influence over him, despite being younger than his three daughters.

Pavarotti had enjoyed previous dalliances, but his wife, Adina, had tolerated them. However, she wrote an angry open letter to an Italian newspaper through her lawyer, about the Mantovani affair. Louise Jury

## Oldest mother has no regrets

The world's oldest mother yesterday said she had no regrets, despite the fact she is in the centre of an international controversy over her "miracle child".

Mrs Arcell Keh, now 64, gave birth on 7 November, when she was 63, to her daughter, Cynthia. Speaking from her home in Highland, California, she defended her decision to have a child so late in life, saying: "I would do it all over again if the doctors would let me. My husband and I would love to have a second child."

"I intend to be around for a long time. A number of people in my family have lived well into their nineties, so I've got very good genes. I plan on devoting every minute of my life to this little bundle of joy – and because I am retired I can do that, which some working mothers cannot do."

She and her 61-year-old husband Isagani, originally from the Philippines, began trying to have a natural child when she was 47, soon after they married in 1980.



The following year, she was told there was no chance of a child. So, lying about her age, she signed up for in vitro fertilisation at the University of California in 1993 – five years past the age set by doctors as an upper limit for the treatment, which cost \$20,000 and succeeded after five attempts.

Kim Sengupta

## Tory spin-doctor stands down

New Labour, new spin doctor – for the Tories. Charles Lewington, Smith Square's answer to Alastair Campbell, is one of the first casualties of the electoral meltdown of the party he was meant to help spin into power.

Mr Lewington, 38, the director of communications for the Conservatives, is in Spain today after handing in his resignation to party chairman Brian Mawhinney.

The former political editor of the *Sunday Express* joined Smith Square 18 months ago. Cherot smoking Mr Lewington, known by various sobriquets of "Lord Snooty" and the "Westminster Lounge Lizard", is now considering a number of offers in the media, but said he would not be making a decision for a few weeks.

Mr Lewington had argued for the sacking of Neil Hamilton and was surprised that John Major refused to call the Tatton association to remove him as its candidate.

## briefing

## HOME AFFAIRS

## Reoffending cut by wider use of community sentences

In a report published next week, the Penal Affairs Consortium urges the new Government to place greater emphasis on the reduction of reoffending, arguing that certain types of community supervision have reduced the rate of reoffending by between 25 and 30 per cent.

These programmes are said to include those which teach offenders to restrain aggressive and impulsive behaviour, tackle alcohol or drug problems, or provide skills training and employment.

The consortium argues that: "A rational strategy for reducing reoffending would involve developing plans to extend the most effective forms of community supervision to many more offenders." It proposes a "national curriculum" of the most effective supervision programmes, to be made available to courts all over the country.

## HEALTH

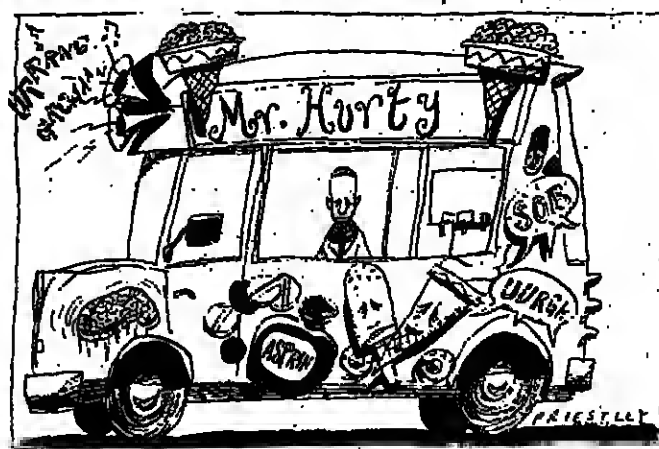
## We all scream after ice cream

The most common cause of headaches is not stress, hangovers or migraine. It is ice cream, according to research published in the *British Medical Journal* yesterday. A third of people have suffered "brain freeze" caused by cold food or drink, writes Professor Joseph Hulihan, of Temple University, Philadelphia.

The condition is characterised by a stabbing or aching pain, which begins a few seconds after eating ice cream and peaks in 30 to 60 seconds. Experiments to induce the effect by applying crushed ice to the palate have shown that it cannot be reproduced in cold weather.

Research had indicated that ice cream headache was a referred pain. It bore a similarity to migraine in that both involved reaction to sensory stimuli.

Professor Hulihan wrote: "No treatment is usually required, and sufferers rarely seek medical attention. Since the posterior aspect of the palate is most likely to produce the referred pain of ice cream headache, avoiding contact of the cold food with this area can effectively eliminate the symptoms."



## CONSERVATION

## Blueprint for saving rare species

A blueprint for managing forests to boost the conservation of rare and endangered birds was published yesterday by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Forestry Commission.

Already, much effort has gone into conserving several types of forest birds, such as the capercaillie, black grouse, nightjar and woodcock, and the plan is based on this and other research.

The paper focuses primarily on man-made, largely coniferous forests, where there are the most commercial opportunities for felling and replanting. Its advice is aimed at benefiting wildlife, with minimal effects on profits.

The RSPB's Scottish director, Stuart Housden, said birds which could benefit included the Scottish crossbill, found only in Highland pinewoods, the black grouse, which is suffering massive population decline, and the barn owl, hit by a shortage of nest sites.

## WHITEHALL

## Records go electronic

The Public Record Office at Kew entered the era of new technology yesterday when it unveiled its first electronically produced government documents – the Nolan Report on standards in public life.

Already, 95 per cent of government records originate electronically, the Treasury goes completely "electronic" this year, and the paper bottlenecks in Whitehall and the Record Office meant deadlines for a rolling programme of computerisation were brought forward to this side of the millennium.

At the moment, the PRO files between 96,000 and 100,000 paper files per year, equivalent to one-and-a-half miles of shelf space. Under an electronic system, a mile of records could be contained in a single box of CD-Roms.

John Crossland



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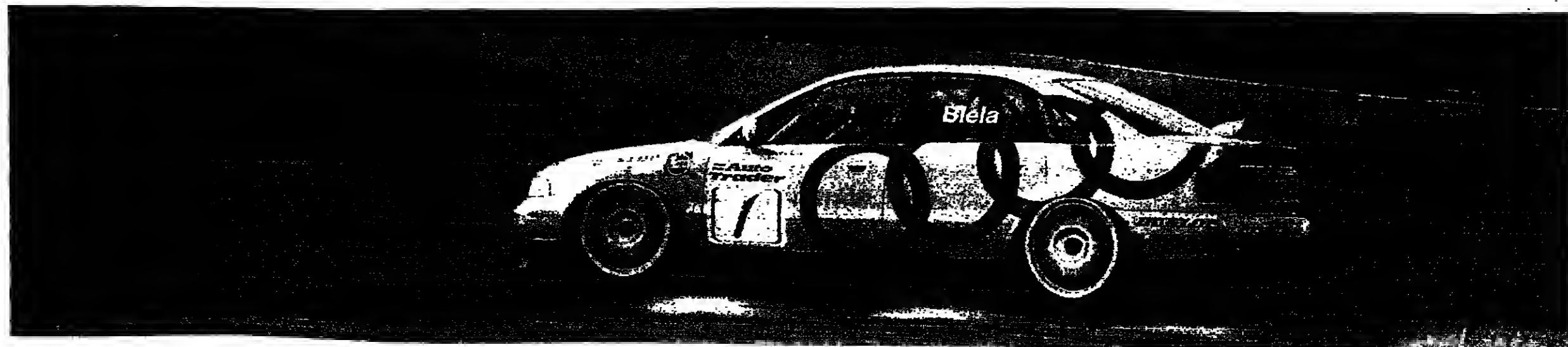
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# Peril in Venice as St Mark's repels invaders

Police commando raid ends short-lived rule of rag-tag Venetian 'liberation' army

Andrew Gumbel  
Rome

It was shortly after dawn yesterday morning when a lone male voice cut into regular radio programmes in Venice with a startling announcement.

"After 200 years, a regular unit of the Most Serene Venetian Army has tonight liberated St Mark's Square," the heavily accented voice said in a low monotone. "Long live St Mark, long live the Serenissima!"

It was not a joke. Or not entirely. Something really quite spectacular had indeed taken place in this lagoon city of a thousand romantic fantasies.

Shortly after midnight, a band of eight men dressed in battle fatigues had commandeered a vaporetto on the Grand Canal, loaded a home-made armoured car on board and ordered the pilot to take them to the Piazza.

Once there, they climbed up to the top of the campanile, unfurled a Venetian flag and set up a pirate radio antenna alongside their sleeping bags and enough food to last them several days. Thus began an all-night adventure that yo-yoed tragically between terrorist drama and costume farce.

The men claimed to be separatist guerrillas seeking to liberate Venice from the colonialist yoke of Rome, but were they serious? Were those real sub-machineguns they were brandishing or just toys? And what was all this nonsense about re-establishing the Venetian

Republic two centuries after the collapse of the glorious maritime republic?

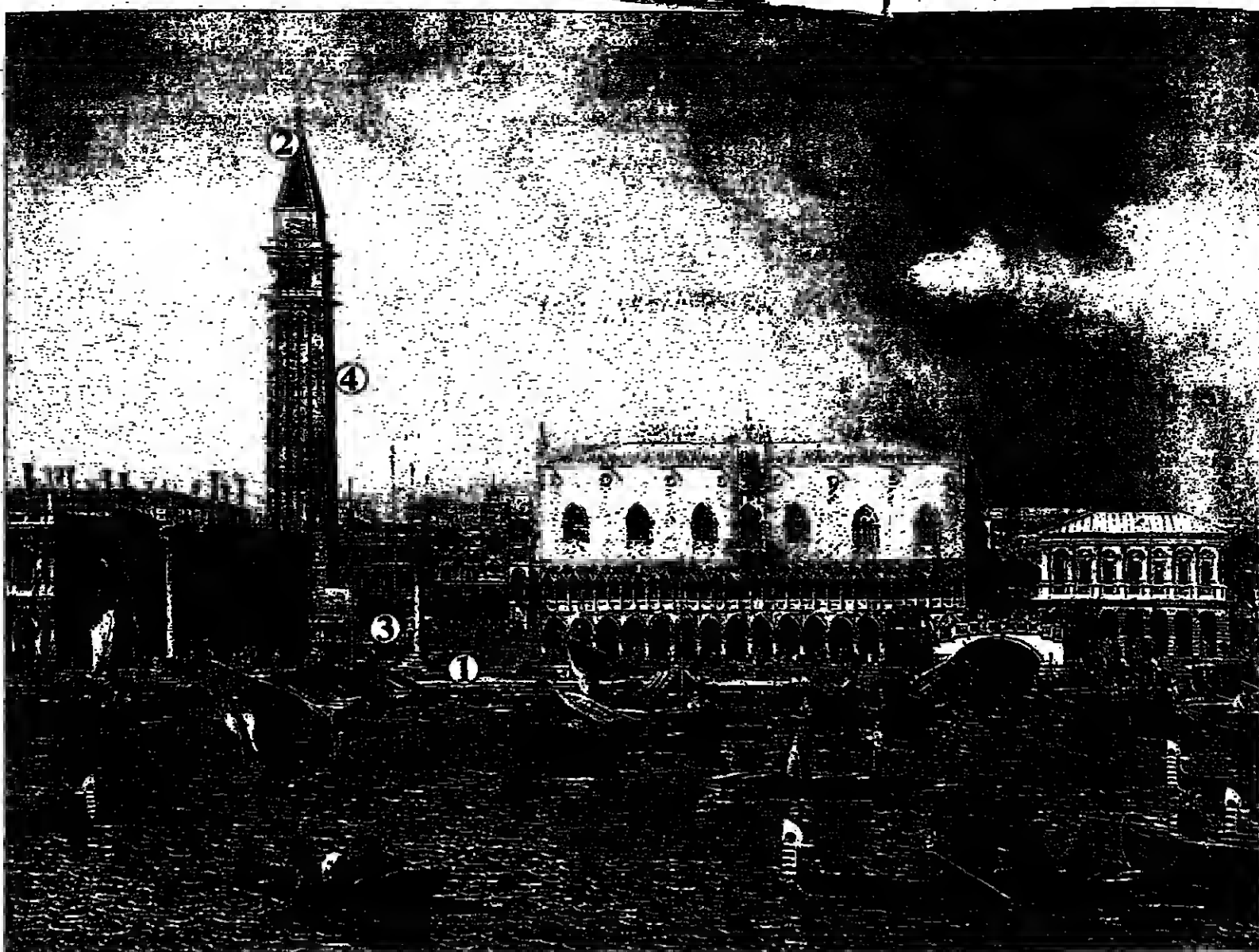
The police took no chances, cordoned off St Mark's Square and embarked on a five-hour negotiation to try to persuade the men to give themselves up peacefully. In the end, they mounted an early-morning commando raid, scaling the campanile with a telescopic ladder and successfully arresting the men without a shot being fired.

It is too soon to say who these pranksters were, but their escapade was certainly well-publicised ahead of time.

For weeks, separatists from the Veneto – angry about high taxes and the backwardness of the Italian south which they believe they are forced to subsidise – have been interrupting state radio and television broadcasts with propaganda about the "rotten and corrupt" Italian state and rallying all "indomitable fellow patriots of the Veneto" to rebel. The date they have been focusing on is this coming Monday, the bicentenary of the fall of the Venetian Republic and the day, according to the separatists, when the Veneto began its long servitude at the hands of outside forces.

They consider Italian unification, which was approved by the Venetians in an overwhelming popular vote in 1866, little different from preceding occupations under Napoleon and the Austrians.

Such rhetoric is too much



Broken idyll: Caneletto's *The Mofo from the Basilica di San Marco Venice, 1747-50* (Photograph: San Diego Museum of Art/Bridgman Art Library)

Right: The group's home-built armoured vehicle lies abandoned in St Mark's Square after their vain attempt to liberate the square

even for Umberto Bossi, leader of Italy's northern separatists, who has found his own considerable talent for agitprop upstaged over and over by the more radical Venetians.

"This is no way to stage a revolution," Mr Bossi tut-tutted yesterday, his voice betraying just a hint of envy.

Mr Bossi's Northern League is planning to declare an Independent State of Padania, with Venice as its capital, in an half-drawn, half-serious ceremony in September.

If he is not careful, though, the Venetian crazies may well declare their independence from him first.

## Siege against the Serenissima

1. The group commandeered a "vaporetto" ferry shortly after midnight to take them, a six-wheeled armoured vehicle they had built themselves and a camper van down the Grand Canal to St Mark's Square.

2. The eight-strong group raised a banner on the tower bearing the symbol of the Lion of St Mark and issued a statement describing themselves as soldiers of the "Most Serene Republic of Venice".

3. A team of 24 masked Carabinieri paramilitary police stormed the bell-tower and arrested the separatists whose protest has put secession

back on the political agenda in Italy.

4. Police, who scaled part of the 99m (325ft) tower found a sub-machinegun and a quantity of ammunition.

The protesters face charges including membership of an armed band, subversion, kidnapping and illegal possession of weapons.

Police linked them to a shadowy group that has interrupted television news bulletins in the north-east for two months, with pirate broadcasts warning of a "spectacular action" to mark Monday's 200th anniversary of the fall of the Venice Republic.

## Lost and found again: an old lady's independence



12 May 1797: The Venetian government votes itself out of office as Napoleon storms in. The people think that they are getting a revolution, but Napoleon sells them out to the Austrians who then begin a 58-year occupation of the city.

1848: The Venetian patriot Daniele Manin, seizing on the mood across the north, leads a popular revolt against the Austrians. The popular revolt lasts several months, but eventually fails.

1866: Following military defeats at both the hands of the French and the Prussians, the Austrians give up Venice, which then becomes a part of the newly unified Italian state.

1979: The first northern separatist movements spring up in the Venice region, spreading gradually into Lombardy and Piedmont.

1996: The leader of the Northern League, Umberto Bossi, launches his "march on the Po" and makes Venice the seat of his largely symbolic rebel government.

## Have we got news for you ... (but not in a brown envelope)

Paul McCann  
Media Correspondent

You could almost have felt sorry for Neil and Christine Hamilton as they were ripped to shreds on *Have I Got News For You* last night. But not quite.

There is something about Mr Hamilton's forced smile and air of indignant innocence that would probably stop you stepping in if he was getting a kicking from three unemployed coal miners, let alone being given a not-so-gentle ribbing by three highly paid satirists.

Mr Hamilton only agreed to appear on the show at the last minute. The programme makers Hat Trick did just want his wife, who throughout the election campaign showed herself to be the talking half of their weird double act. But they both showed up as one guest on the show, perhaps to double the £750 appearance fee.

You could tell exactly how much of the show was going to be turned over to baiting the Hamiltons when it started with the show's host Angus Deayton wearing a white suit – as made famous by Martin Bell, Mr Hamilton's constituency.

Mr Hamilton wore a red bow-tie for the show, a sure sign that he is planning a comeback that he is planning a comeback. It career as a media eccentric. It would only be fair – after all Martin Bell has his old job so Mr Hamilton could have his.

The forced smiles stayed in



Keeping up appearances: The Hamiltons on *Have I Got News For You* Photograph: PA

place for all of the show, even when the specialist publication that the show gets its missing headlines from was *The Ritz* hotel's in-house magazine – the hotel where Mr and Mrs Hamilton so famously stayed at the expense of its then owner, Mohamed Al-Fayed.

It has to be said that Mr Hamilton did have one good joke and like all the others in the show it was directed against himself. When Mrs Hamilton was asked who should be the

next Tory leader she refused to be drawn. But ever-modest Mr Hamilton suggested himself. "I think I could successfully write the party because they would all be against me."

The show's regulars, Paul Merton and Ian Hislop, and even the other guest Maureen Lipman, could not resist continuous digs at the couple but they resisted the temptation to soap back, even when handed a pair of stuffed brown envelopes at the end of the show.

It may be that the Tatton defeat and the campaign itself – compete with soap stars, foreign correspondents, towering transvestites and David Soul – has nudged the Hamiltons past the point of caring about insults.

They are either now far more thick-skinned than when they used to keep libel lawyers on their BT Friends and Family list, or they have realised that fame will not last much longer and are making the most of it. In which case the joke was on us.



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# Doctors accused of falsifying records

Jeremy Laurance  
Health Editor

A consultant obstetrician and a senior midwife were accused by a High Court judge yesterday of falsifying medical records and giving misleading evidence after the "disaster" birth of a boy who was left profoundly disabled.

The pair claimed they had told the boy's mother, Francesca Brock-Hollinshead, to go straight

to hospital after she attended an antenatal clinic for a check complaining of stomach pains, but she had refused. Mrs Brock-Hollinshead denied she was given this advice and returned home while she was in labour.

Her son Oscar, now aged six, was born at home several hours later in a "traumatic" breech delivery during which his head became stuck and he suffered brain damage due to asphyxia.

The judge, who found the health authority liable yesterday, said Oscar would need care for the rest of his life and is expected to award Mrs Brock-Hollinshead a sum in excess of £1m.

John Crowley QC, sitting as a deputy judge, said he preferred the evidence of the mother, and that notes made by the consultant and midwife about their advice were added after the home birth went wrong.

Mrs Brock-Hollinshead was booked for the birth at Farnborough hospital, Keot and was seen by consultant obstetrician Dr Edgar Tatford at the Masons antenatal clinic on 19 March 1991. The judge said that he was "driven to the conclusion" that Dr Tatford, consultant for the Bromley group of hospitals in Keot, had added notes to his original after the birth to give the impression that

he had advised the mother to go straight to hospital.

Mr Crowley said: "I appreciate that this is a strong finding to make against someone of his status but having heard the witnesses and considered the relevant documents, that is my finding."

The judge said that two entries in the medical notes made by Sister Ruth Coull, that the mother was to be admitted to hospital and that she appeared

to be having contractions when leaving the clinic but had refused to go to hospital, had been made at different times.

He said: "As her cross-examination proceeded Sister Coull conceded that the entries she had made relating to events in the corridor were unfair to the mother. It then emerged that the entries had been made ... after the disaster of Oscar's birth had occurred."

Mrs Brock-Hollinshead, 33, of Cranleigh, Surrey, was eventually seen by an obstetric team at her home when Oscar was delivered up to his neck and there was a delay of five to 10 minutes in freeing the head.

The judge said that it was Mr Tatford himself who had first used the word "disaster" to describe the circumstances of Oscar's birth.

He added: "I am satisfied that

he could and should have taken steps to discuss the matter properly with the mother and explain to her what had gone wrong. I find that the reason why he did not do this or indicate in any way to the hospital authorities that there was at least cause for further inquiry is that he had been at fault on the 19 March 1991 in not advising the mother to go straight to the labour ward."

## Refugee sent back home to his death

Patricia Wynn Davies

The Refugee Council called last night for a freeze on deportations of rejected asylum seekers back to Algeria and a review of all outstanding cases, after a former Algerian policeman was murdered by the authorities there on his return.

The 25-year-old man, who the council is not naming because of fears of reprisals against his family, had had his claim for refugee status in the UK refused and was forcibly deported in handcuffs on 27 April. Less than a fortnight later, following two spells in detention, his body was delivered to his mother for burial.

He was one of a number of former police officers who have fled Algeria in fear for their lives or disgust at torture practised by Algerian security forces.

Mohammed Sekkoum, chairman of the Algerian Refugee Council in London, said he believed the man was arrested by the police and the security services on his arrival in Algeria so that he could be interrogated about his contacts with other Algerians who have fled to London, and that he met his death through being tortured.

The number of Algerians seeking asylum in Britain has risen from 25 in 1990 to more than 4,000 following the outbreak of civil war in 1992. There is a growing body of reports blaming government forces, as

well as armed Islamic opposition factions, for atrocities against politicians, journalists, intellectuals and policemen.

Nick Hardwick, chief executive of the Refugee Council, said: "It is a matter of great shame for his country that someone should be killed in Algeria because we failed to offer sanctuary against persecution."

The case is not the first where returned Algerians have been tortured, "disappeared" or met their deaths. But the fate of the man stands in contrast to that of his brother, another former Algerian police officer, who was granted refugee status in Canada. Their father, also a policeman, was killed last year.

The man's asylum case was doomed when having been granted temporary admission, he changed his address without notifying the Home Office. That meant he never received notification of his appeal against an initial refusal of asylum. He was later arrested for breaching the terms of his temporary admission, and representations urging the Home Office to reconsider his case were rejected.

Sources said the UK authorities had furnished Algeria with details showing the returned deportee had been a police officer, making him a prime target for arrest.

A Home Office spokeswoman said last night that they were aware of the case and were making urgent enquiries into it.



Scare tactics: Jimi Hendrix among the figures chosen by teachers on the Isle of Wight when asked to make scarecrows in an Arts Council project to raise pupils' rural awareness. Project staff Becky Priest and Rachel Nightingale are putting the finishing touches. Photograph: John Voos

## Where good food costs more...

Glenda Cooper  
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Customers at a Bournemouth Sainsbury's - slogan "Where Good Food Costs Less" - found their food cost them more than at neighbouring stores run by the company.

Prices on a range of products including coffee and laundry liquid went up by as much as 60p at the store in Hampshire Centre mall.

Yesterday a company representative visited Bournemouth to apologise to the shoppers, and return prices to their original level, as the issue was featured on Radio 4's consumer programme *You and Yours*.

One shopper, Marilyn Rigler had spotted two weeks ago that jars of Nescafé coffee had soared by 19p from £1.79. Checking the price against jars in another Sainsbury's three miles away in Boscombe, she was amazed to find that the rise applied only to her store.

The chain - which announced a 15 per cent slump in pre-tax profits in its annual results on Wednesday - said that the variations in price were part of market research which was "limited to a small number of stores and a specific time frame".

A spokeswoman for the National Consumer Council said: "The message to consumers has got to be the traditional advice - stay alert and shop around."

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## news

## Court puts children out of the swim

Seven children yesterday failed to make legal history and take their council to court over a broken promise to build a leisure centre and swimming-pool.

A High Court judge ruled the seven, from Colliers Wood, south-west London, could not seek judicial review as their case was "bound to fail". Acting through their parents, the children, aged three to 14, argued that planners erred in law when they struck a shopping-development deal with Sainsbury's which dropped the leisure-centre project. The alternative amenities included a restaurant, bingo hall and fitness centre but not the pool they wanted.

The original deal between Merton Council and the supermarket firm in 1986 included the leisure centre as part of a Sainsbury project at Colliers Wood.

Richard Gordon QC, for the children, accused the council of creating an unlawful "hotchpotch" involving planning rules and regulations.



Thwarted: Five of the Colliers Wood Seven - Kate Barker (left), Joanna Dauncey, Harry Barker, Tom Dauncey, Spilka Godding Photograph: Reuters

## Blair lifts hopes of end to beef ban

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

Tooy Blair is working on a strategy for lifting the European ban on British exports of beef, which could be the first glittering prize to him from a closer relationship with Britain's European partners.

The lifting of the beef ban was raised yesterday at the first meeting between the Prime Minister and the current holders of the European Union presidency, led by the Dutch Prime Minister, Wim Kok, amid clear signals that Britain will sign up to a deal on closer union at the Amsterdam summit.

Underlining the new era of greater cooperation with Europe, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said after their lunch at Downing Street he believed Britain would not be isolated at the Inter-Governmental Conference. "It now seems to me that it will be possible for us to reach an agreement at Amsterdam."

Mr Blair is taking personal control of the beef strategy in the hope that the new mood of cooperation will produce dividends with the gradual lifting of the ban, which has cost Britain billions of pounds and thousands of jobs. One of his officials said: "He is totally seized of the importance of beef. He will be taking time to put together a real strategy on beef."

Mr Cook emerged from the meeting at Number 10 confirming that Britain will keep its border controls, in spite of a move at the Amsterdam summit on 16-17 June towards more open borders inside the EU with the completion of the single market.

Britain's own readiness to sign the social chapter - in the face of continued criticism by candidates for the Tory party leadership - was warmly welcomed by Mr Kok. The Dutch leader said: "Britain's decision to accept the social chapter, to be in favour of a strong employment paragraph in the treaty, is an enormous step forward."

The Foreign Secretary said the meeting with Mr Kok in the first week of the Labour government was "a sign of the way in which the new Labour government is being taken seriously in Europe and can do serious business with Europe."

Mr Cook said: "We are already making substantial progress to getting our objectives. One of the reasons for that is that we have identified those issues where Britain needs to score and does need to deliver. The problem with the sterile and negative attitude of the previous government is that they shied away from everything."

and were not heard when they really meant it."

Downing Street and senior Cabinet ministers were keen to avoid raising the expectations of an early lifting of the beef ban, but the Government has inherited an advanced plan for the partial lifting of export ban on beef from certified herds and that will be pushed forward in agricultural meetings later this month.

Jack Cunningham, the Agriculture minister, will start the process with a courtesy call to Franz Fischler, the EU Agriculture Commissioner, on Monday, before preparing for an Agriculture Council of Ministers meeting 20 May.

There was a widespread view

## Clinton to call in at No 10

Colin Brown

Clinton will make a major international visit to the White House, US President Bill Clinton, will visit London this month. He will be the first President to visit Britain since the end of the Cold War. His decision to visit is seen as a sign of the new relationship between the two countries. The President will arrive on 27 or 28 May, following his visit to the Netherlands and Ireland. He is expected to be the main topic of discussion. The Democratic president and the New Labour prime minister will meet on a range of issues. They have met before and struck up a professional and personal rapport.

Mr Clinton was not present when the Conservative Party held its annual conference in Washington, but he is expected to be the main topic of discussion. The Democratic president and the New Labour prime minister will meet on a range of issues. They have met before and struck up a professional and personal rapport. Mr Clinton was not present when the Conservative Party held its annual conference in Washington, but he is expected to be the main topic of discussion.

In Whitehall that Douglas Hogg, his predecessor, failed to make the breakthrough because of the lack of political cooperation in Europe. John Major and his government complained that the refusal to lift the beef ban had gone beyond the scientific reasons, but Downing Street officials said the new Blair government would end the "ridiculous ideological hatreds" to begin more positive, constructive contacts.

## Howard HQ set up in Aitken home

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

Michael Howard's election team will move into the Westminster home of Jonathan Aitken, the former Treasury minister, over the weekend, to step up his campaign for the Conservative Party leadership.

The Howard campaign will be based in Lord North Street, a few doors down from the house where, in 1995, BT engineers were spotted installing telephone lines for a possible bid for the leadership by Michael Portillo.

Mr Aitken resigned as a minister to fight allegations of sleaze, and lost his seat in the election. He has no vote, but is a close friend of the Howard.

"It is very generous of him," said a campaign source. Mr Howard and his wife, the former model Sandra Paul, have a London house, in addition to the grace and favour flat in Belgrave, where Mr Howard struck the aborted deal over champagne with William Hague to act as his running mate.

Mr Hague, who is using the Victoria offices of Jonathan Sayeed, a re-elected Tory MP and businessman, yesterday posed for photographs in his constituency in Richmond, Yorkshire. "He will be getting

out of Westminster and co-sponsoring the constituency," said one of his team. They claim that 70 per cent of constituency chairmen like Mr Hague's youth and are backing him.

Another contender, John Redwood, effectively asked fellow Euro-sceptic Bill Cash yesterday to join the race.

Mr Cash, MP for Stone, was said to be unhappy at Mr Redwood's declared willingness to have Europhile Kenneth Clarke in his Shadow Cabinet if he wins. All he would say publicly was: "We must have clarity on the issue of Europe in the leadership."

However, when Mr Redwood was asked at a Westminster news conference about the reports, he said: "I hope I can reassure Bill that I have been entirely clear about Europe - none clearer."

Some Tory MPs are deeply unhappy with the candidates. One said he would have liked Iain Duncan Smith to run, but he is expected to act as Mr Redwood's campaign manager.

The election of a chairman and officers of the 1922 Committee is on 21 May. They will then organise the leadership election for mid-June.

## index

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# Spoilt for choice as Whitby's ship comes in

Ian Burrell

Residents of a sleepy Yorkshire seaside resort woke up this morning to the bizarre sight of Captain Cook's ship moored in the harbour and the realisation that their football team is playing at Wembley this afternoon.

Not much has happened in Whitby since its former resident James Cook set sail from the tiny port in 1768 on his historic voyage to discover and chart New Zealand and Australia's east coast.

But last night thousands of visitors packed the harbour for a vantage point as a £7m replica of his ship the *Endeavour* completed a seven-month journey from Australia.

The town's mayor, John Smith, was so overcome yesterday that he was moved to describe the ship's arrival as "the event of the century". Whitby, he said, was "humming with excitement and enjoying being under the world spotlight".

The drama is almost too real for a town which is usually only in the spotlight as the backdrop for the popular television series *Heartbeat*. Whitby also features in Bram Stoker's classic horror story *Dracula*.

But as the visitors flocked in, many Whitby folk headed out of town and down the M1. For supporters of Whitby Town FC,

today marked an even more historic occasion; the club's first appearance in the final of the amateur FA Vase for 30 years.

"It's a remarkable coincidence both should be happening at the same weekend," said Mr Smith.

"In a way it's a pity they couldn't have been kept separate as it's causing problems for some people. There are shopkeepers who planned to be at Wembley to cheer on the team who are wondering if they ought to stay here because their shops will be busy with all the extra visitors coming to see *Endeavour*."

The new *Endeavour* was built in Perth and set sail for the United Kingdom last October under the command of Captain Chris Blake. Among the crew is Whitby sea cadet Carl Johnson, who joined her in South Africa. Captain Cook was born in the village of Marton, Cleveland, in 1728 and his maritime career began with a Whitby firm of sea traders. He joined the Royal Navy in 1755 and developed his skills as a navigator. Thirteen years later, he was given the chance to journey to the Pacific to observe the transit of the planet Venus across the Sun and to search for a presumed southern continent.

The replica will be open to public viewing for eight days at Whitby's *Endeavour Wharf*.



Cook's tour: The replica of the *Endeavour* sailing past Staithes on its way to Whitby in North Yorkshire, yesterday

Photograph: Michael Scott

## Scenic setting for vampire's birth

Whitby provided the setting for Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, after the ship containing his coffin was wrecked off its coast. The vampire claimed one of its victims - Lucy - in the town's graveyard and the when he metamorphosed into a dog, is meant to have boun up the 189 Church Stairs.

In 1844, the Synod of Whitby settled the date of Easter, decided that the rites and authority of the Roman rather than Celtic Church should be adopted, and ruled on the issue of whether priests should shave their beards in the shape of a ring or a crescent.

Caedmon, one of the brothers at Whitby Abbey in the 7th century, wrote the nine-line *Song of Creation* - one of the earliest surviving poems in the English language. Whitby has since been named the birthplace of the English Literature.

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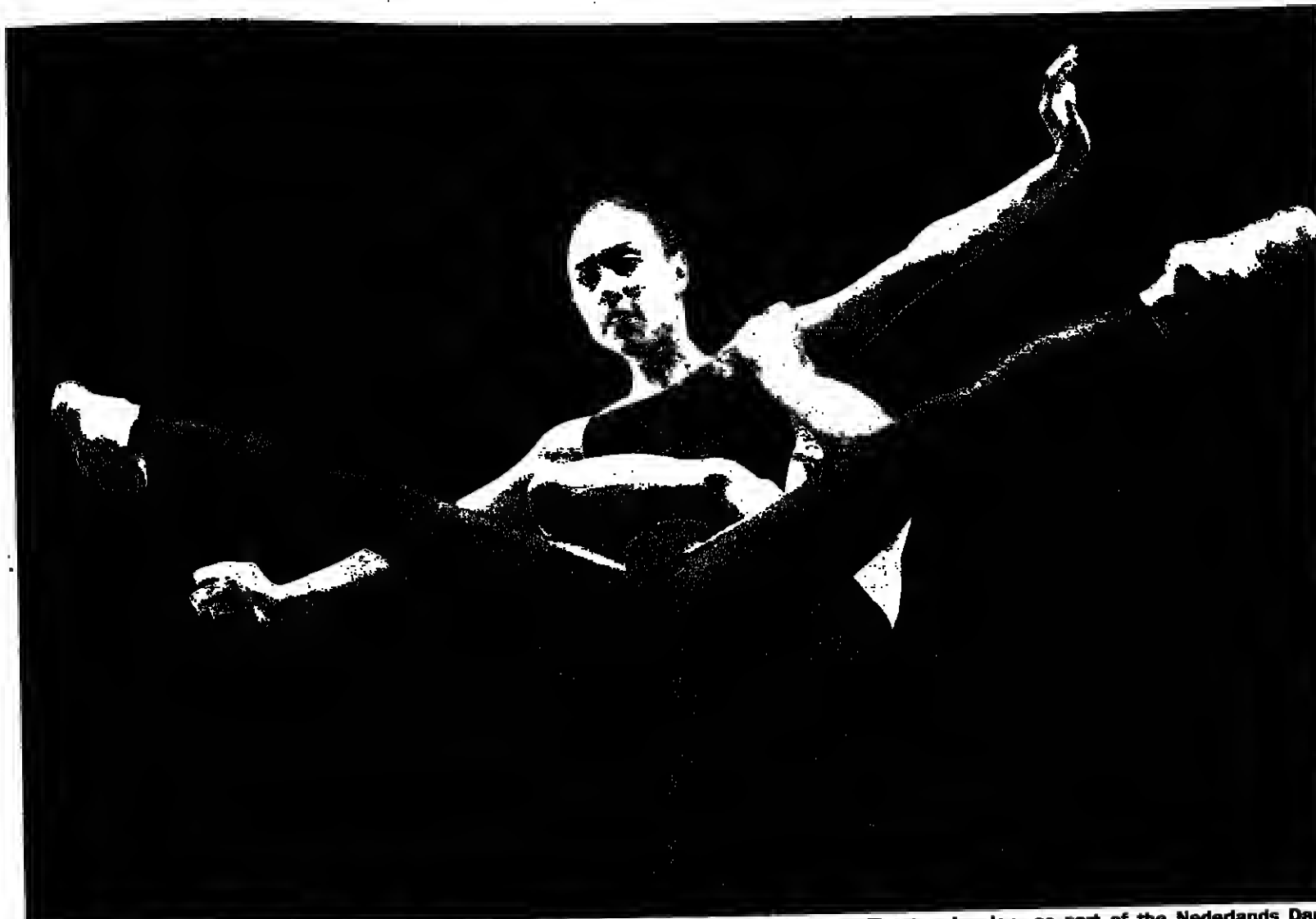
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Double Dutch: Shirley Esseboom with Vaclav Kunes performing *Deja Vu* at the Peacock Theatre, London, as part of the Nederlands Dans Theater's programme opening tonight at Sadler's Wells. The piece has been choreographed by Hans Van Manen Photograph: Laurie Lewis

## Police's new armour is no right for job

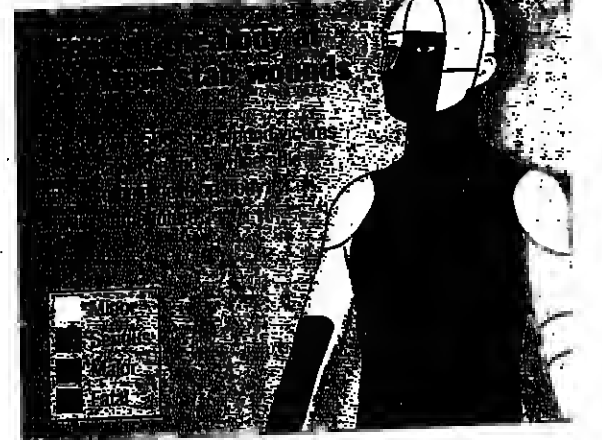
Jason Bennetto  
Crime Correspondent

Police body armour issued to more than 20,000 officers is "unsafe and unsuitable" and will not prevent fatal injuries from stabbing, according to the findings of a Home Office study.

The unpublished research concludes that the American-style protective vests used by the Metropolitan Police at a cost of £8m are the wrong type for Britain. Other police forces are also understood to be using similar equipment.

The findings from the 18-month study have caused a row with Scotland Yard who argue that the "MetVest" is the best available.

Forces throughout the country have been providing body armour to beat officers following a growing number of attacks. But a leading medical expert



says that the Metropolitan Police equipment is ideal for stopping bullets, but cannot prevent a blade from inflicting a fatal injury. His studies show that officers could be in danger of serious injury to heart, lungs, liver, spleen and kidneys.

He argues that only a tiny number of patrol officers are shot – in the eight years from 1988 to 1995 there were 90 officers shot while on duty, of whom seven died – compared with the relatively large numbers of knife attacks.

In the Metropolitan Police area during 1993 and 1994 two police officers were stabbed to death, 22 seriously injured and 41 received minor wounds. This compares with one fatal shooting and six serious gunshot wounds.

Tony Bleetman, an accident and emergency consultant at Heartlands hospital in Birmingham, said: "The biggest threat to patrol officers is from knives. There's a negligible ballistic threat – ordinary patrol police officers therefore need to be protected from knives first and foremost, not guns."

Under the Home Office standards for body armour the blade of a knife should penetrate no more than five millimetres before being stopped and a bullet can push the vest back 25mm. With the MetVest, a knife can penetrate 20mm and a bullet can push the vest back 44mm.

Mr Bleetman examined whether it was safe to allow a knife to enter the body for 20mm.

He concluded: "If it goes in this far there's a much higher risk to injury to heart, lungs, liver, spleen and kidneys. For knives this standard is unsafe, but with 5mm nothing will get damaged."

He added that the vests are very effective at preventing

death from shooting. Mr Bleetman said it were vests that meet all the requirements but admit were more cumbersome and Yard argues that must be able to move the new equipment.

A Metropolitan spokesman said: "The is the best equipment. We have tested it to very high and rigorous standards based on our own detailed analysis and we are confident it will be effective against the vast majority of knife attacks which our officers are facing."

Mr Bleetman has examined 500 stabbings and found that the "blind spots" where the body are not fully protected are strengthened at the back, the left side of the neck, the left side of the chest where most fatal attacks occur.

His study discovered 7.7 per cent of the cases one was fatally wounded a third of the time the life-threatening particularly in the face, abdomen, and in about 50 per cent of cases they minor wounds, typical wounds all over the body. The research was funded by the Police Federation and will be presented at a conference in Blackpool this month.

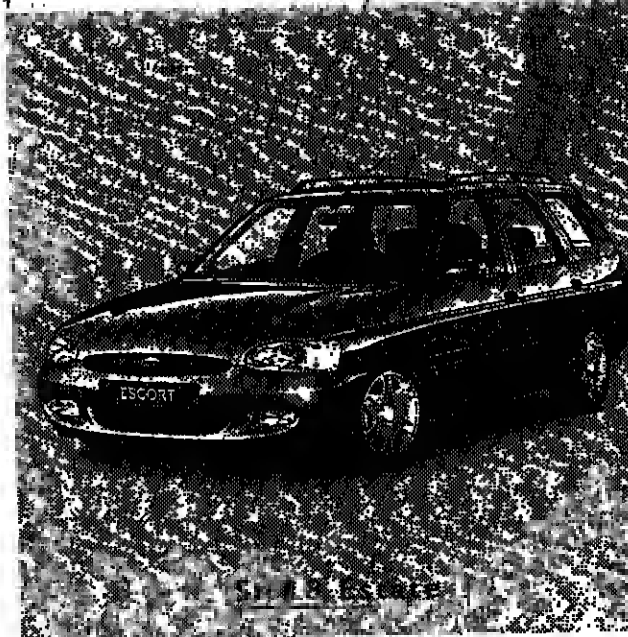
Mr Bleetman has considered the effect of who wear vests and concluded that there is a risk from inflammation of breast tissue and "joy ple", caused by friction. But he has ruled out with cancer. He concluded there needs to be vests for women, in a range of sizes.



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## World's priciest soup can fetches a cool £2.2m

Edward Helmore and Louise Jury

One of the pop artist Andy Warhol's legendary Campbell's soup can paintings has been sold in New York for \$3.5m (£2.2m).

The image, which along with his Coke bottles and brightly coloured Marilyn Monroes galvanised art in the 1960s, had been estimated to make not more than £1.5m.

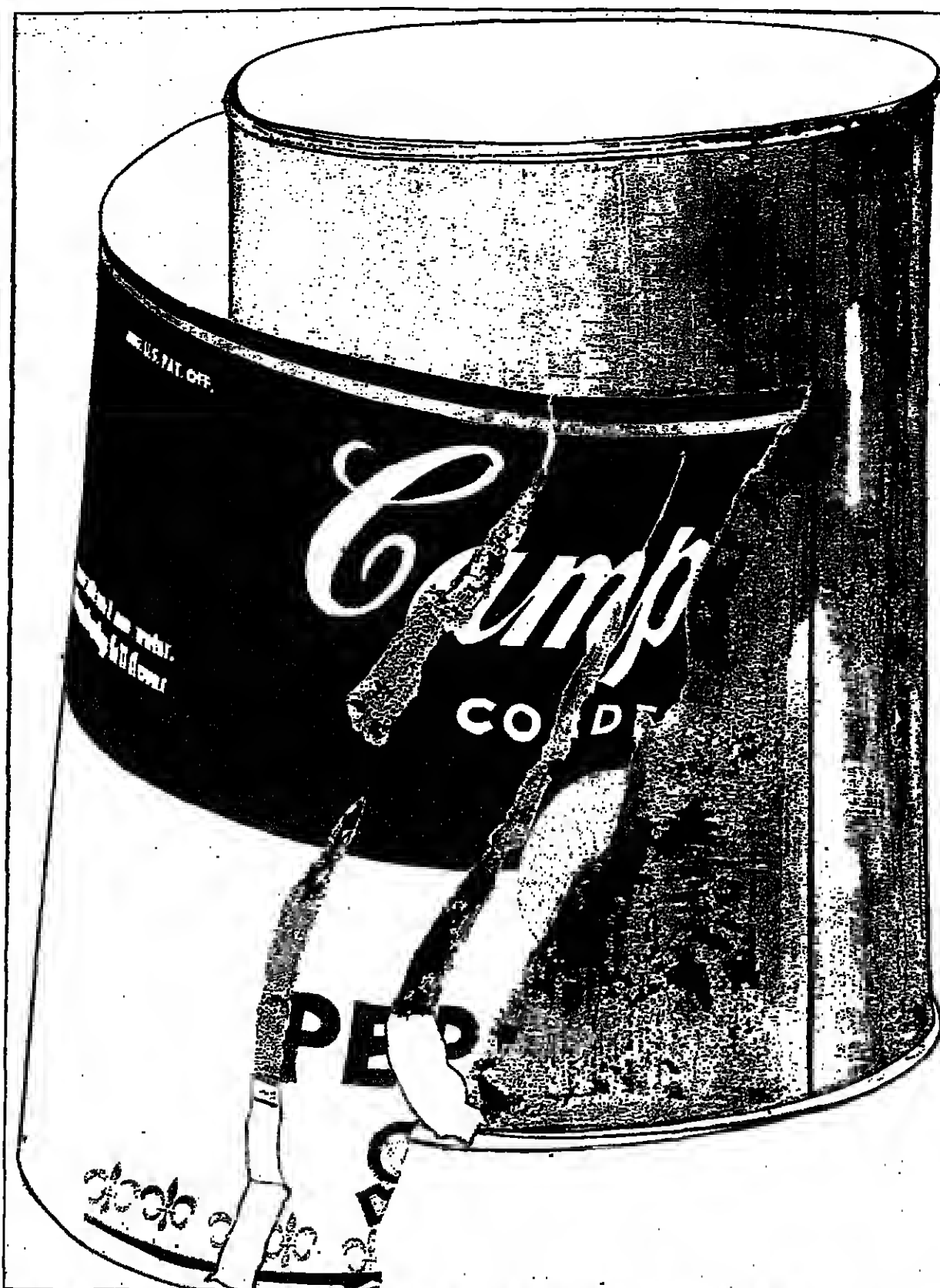
The final price reflected the continuing international fascination with the shock-haired son of Carpatho-Russian immigrants who moved to the bright lights of New York and became a legend. He died in 1987 at the age of 58.

The *Big Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Pepper Pot)*, which dates from 1962, was one of his last group of hand-painted pictures before he switched to silk screen work.

The iconographic picture achieved the highest price for a Warhol soup can and, the fourth highest price for the colourful, controversial and self-publicising artist who turned everything around him into art.

The sale was the highlight of the spring sales of contemporary art in New York during the past week.

Christopher Burge, a spokesman for the auctioneers, Christie's, said it was a "healthy, strong, sensible market... Buyers are getting good advice and there is no sense of speculation."



Hot stuff: The *Big Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Pepper Pot)* painting by Andy Warhol (above left), who died in 1987

Despite the strength of the American economy and the careful selection of work on offer, auction house prices have not soared. There has, however, been keen bidding for a new generation of artists.

Sotheby's offered work by 1990s artists including Turner Prize winner Rachel Whiteread, who produced the concrete house in Bow, east London.

Her *Untitled (Double Amber Bed)* quadrupled its estimate, selling for just over £100,000 (\$167,000) to Anthony D'Offay, the London art dealer who has

represented Whiteread since persuading her to leave her previous dealer, Karsten Schubert.

Commenting on the newer works, Tobias Meyer, Sotheby's new head of contemporary art in New York, said: "This will be the art that in 10 years people will wish they had bought tonight."

Matthew Barney's installation *Transsexuals (decline)*, which shows a walk-in freezer and a weightlifter's declining bench coated with petroleum jelly, more than doubled its high estimate of £211,000.

Among other artists represented in the sales were Jasper Johns and Roy Lichtenstein. *Blarg!* a typical comic-book Lichtenstein from 1962 showing a tank hit by a cannon blast went for £1.7m, slightly less than the estimate. Particular interest centred on how works by Willem de Kooning, who died in March, would fare.

Both Christie's and Sotheby's offered paintings with estimates of up to £1.5m. But one *Untitled* painting from 1947 fetched only £1m while another, entitled *Amityville*, failed to sell. However, *Bakery Counter*, a still-life of cakes, doughnuts and other confectionery by the San Francisco pop artist Wayne Thiebaud went for £1m against a previous record price for the artist of around £370,000.

More than £300m of art is on offer in New York in the next few weeks. The biggest draw will take place on Monday when a significant collection of Impressionist paintings from the estate of John and Francis Loeb is expected to raise at least \$49m.

## City's muslims declare 'holy war' on blacks

Ian Burrell

Right-wing extremists are suspected of being behind a plot to set Muslims in Derby on a holy war against the local black community.

Leaflets circulated in multi-racial areas of the city over a period of several weeks contained vicious slurs on black people and called for them to be subjected to an Islamic jihad.

The literature, which called on Muslims to "break their bones in the name of Allah" led to spiralling racial tension in the Normanton area of the city. Police had to intervene in a stand-off involving several hundred Afro-Caribbeans and Asians outside a pub last month.

Derby city council has been so shocked by the language in the leaflet and its effect on race relations that it is drawing up its own document to counteract it.

The council has set up a working party, which includes leading figures in the black and Asian communities, to restore the good relations which had previously existed in the city.

Police who are anxious to prosecute the authors of the leaflet under the Public Order Act, now believe that it is the work of non-Muslims attempting to stir up racial unrest.

Muslim leaders, who have denounced the document, said it contains basic errors in phraseology and language which would not have been made by a genuine fundamentalist.

In particular, it wrongly uses the expression "superior", which even the most extreme Muslim groups only use as a reference to Allah. It also refers to black people as slaves, despite the fact that there are millions of black muslims in the world.

Inspector John Stamp, of Derby police, said: "We have been advised that there are religious and factual inaccuracies that would tend to suggest that it has not been written by someone who knows their facts about the Muslim religion."

He added: "We are taking the stance that it is a document which is being used to cause offence and lead people to take umbrage against the Muslim religion, thinking it has come from them."

Although leaders of all communities have worked hard to dispel people's fears, Inspector Stamp admitted that the leaflet had succeeded in provoking increased tension.

Lindsey Stewart, a Normanton pub landlord who witnessed the stand-off, said: "It has damaged my trade and frightened away many of my white customers."

When the leaflet appeared, suspicion had fallen on the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, a fundamentalist group which had been recruiting at the Derby College Wilmorton and was being monitored by police special branch.

The H-U-T, which is banned from many British university campuses, has been denounced for its anti-semitism and once called for the assassination of John Major.

Muslim youths have recently clashed with Sikh gangs in Southall and Slough, to the west of London. But there is no history of tension between the Muslims and Afro-Caribbeans.

## College applications to go electronic

Lucy Ward  
Education Correspondent

Information technology is to revolutionise the annual university admissions paper-chase, sounding the death-knell for cumbersome prospectuses and application forms.

From this month, prospective students will no longer be forced to wade through mountains of brochures in search of the perfect course.

Instead, they will simply tap their key requirements and expected grades into their school computer and wait for a list of suggestions matching their needs.

In September, they will become the first generation of sixth-formers to be able to apply electronically to their chosen university, swapping traditional standard application forms for an on-screen version.

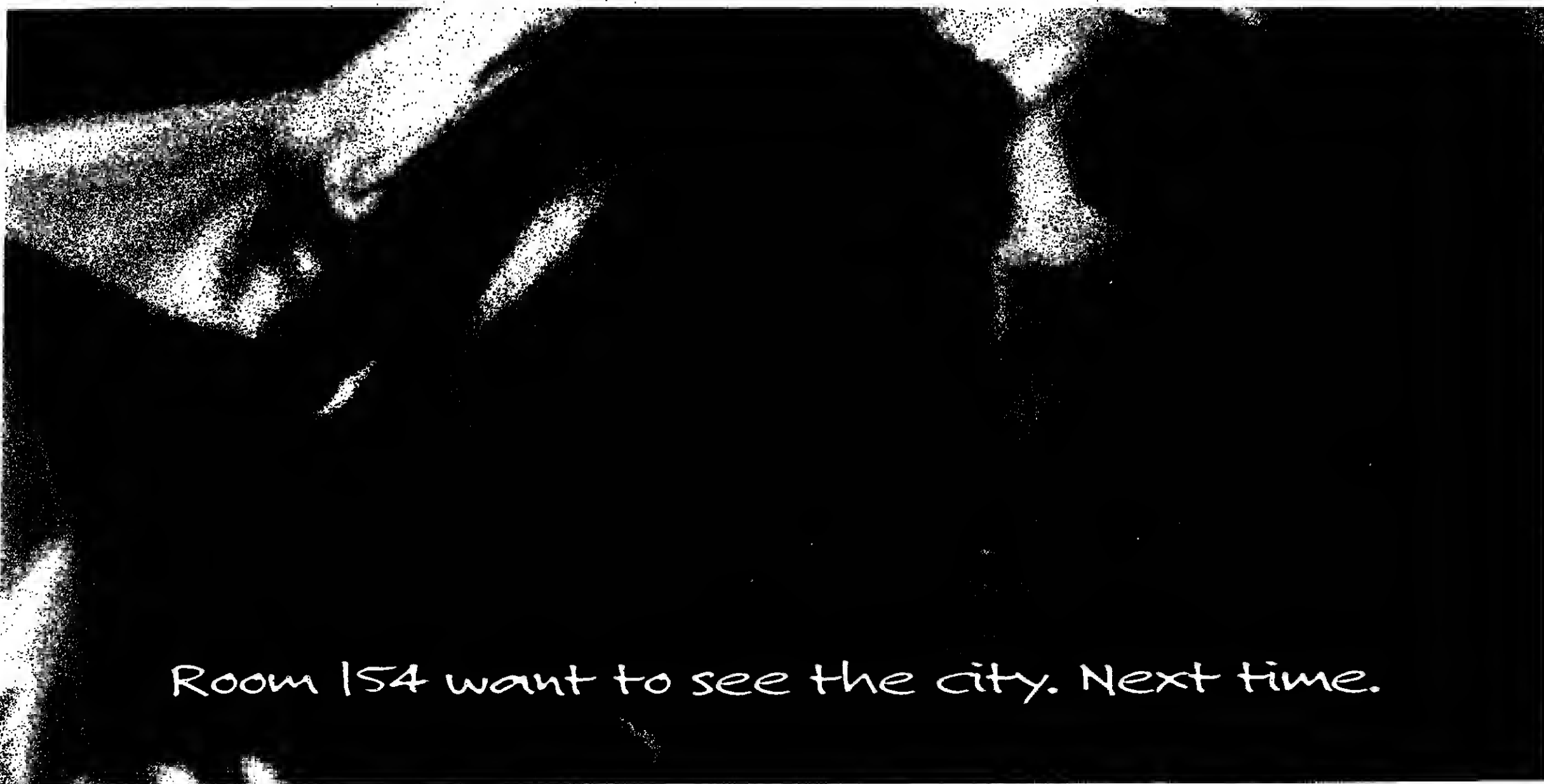
The advent of technology in admissions will make the often stressful university applications process faster and less open to errors and fraud, according to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

UCAS, which processes 418,400 application forms annually, believes the speed of its on-screen version could also pave the way for a dual applications system, allowing candidates to opt to apply to university after receiving A-level results instead of beforehand using predicted grades.

The interactive Course Search service being launched next month on the Internet is designed to provide a short-cut to suitable courses. Students can narrow down their choices by entering preferred institutions or areas of the country, mode of study, course level or entry qualifications. Once a course is selected, pupils can cross-refer at the touch of a button to the web site of the university concerned to discover an on-screen prospectus detailing everything from student numbers to accommodation costs.

The electronic application form, which is to be tested in 35 schools this year, will be modelled on the printed version, though it will be tailored to suit students taking A-levels or vocational GNVQs.

Within a few years, however, UCAS hopes to replace it with a new on-screen "profile of achievement" providing details not only of qualifications and predicted results but a full student curriculum vitae covering achievements in key skills and extra-curricular interests.



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## international

**Military markets:** Try as they might to avoid it, firms selling weapons of war still face moral dilemma

# Arms traders find blind eye is best defence

Richard Lloyd Parry  
Singapore

In Singapore last week, just as during the Gulf War, it was clear that for all the bad press they have received over the years, missiles and other bringers of death all have their own distinct personalities.

At the International Maritime Defence Exhibition (Index Asia '97) which ended yesterday, there were no evil Scuds or plucky little Patriots, but the glossy magazines and audio-visual displays mounted by the 300 defence manufacturers introduced a whole range of less famous personalities.

Among helicopters there was the Boeing Chinook ("a versatile warhorse that won't take no for an answer") and the Saab ASW-601 grenade launcher or, as its manufacturers nickname it, the "Submarine Slayer".

Rather more mystifying to the layman was the gaily named Hellfire II Missile System.

The most radical attempt to humanise a piece of military equipment came from the manufacturers of an ingenious

artillery shell which explodes before impact to release a shower of deadly tungsten pellets.

A piece of metal which had been subjected to this ordeal was displayed and, as I peered through the holes in the inch-thick steel and wondered aloud at the effect this might have on a human target, an attendant approached. "When you write about this," he said, "don't make it sound too... liberal."

"Lethal ordnance with a liberal conscience" would make a fine advertising slogan, but there was a serious significance to Mr Tungsten's anxiety. Despite the eclipse of mass peace movements and the huge economic benefits it brings to countries including Britain, moral questions still hover over the business of "defence sales".

For European exporters one of the most lucrative markets has been the Middle East, a political and diplomatic minefield, as the arms to Iraq scandal demonstrated. But exhibitors at Index, the biggest fair of its kind in the region, were in no doubt that the future of arms exports lie in the Far East.

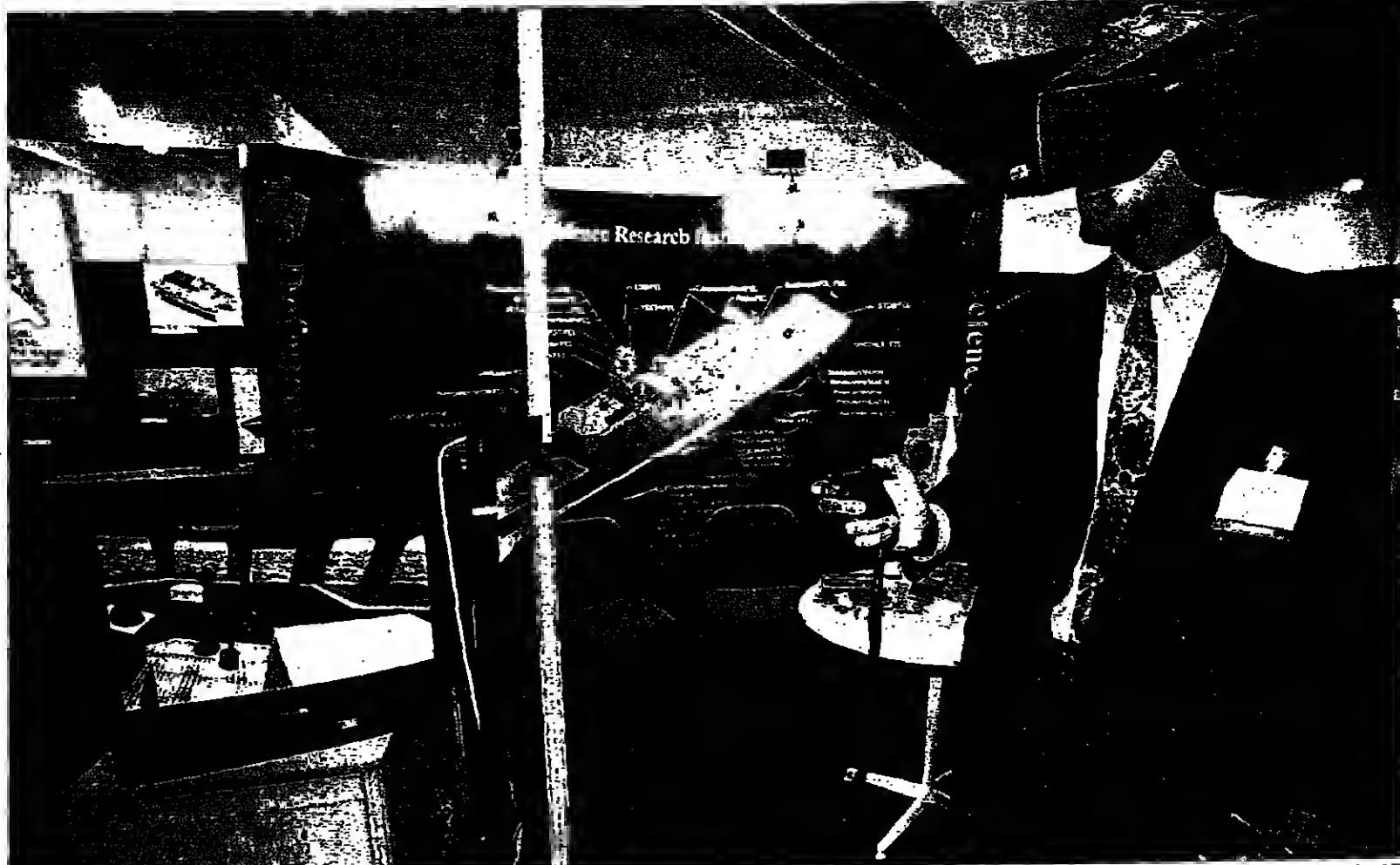
"Asia is going to be the biggest defence market in the world in 20 or 25 years," says David Saw, editor of the *Asian Military Review*. "It has the money, and it has the need."

It also has unsavoury regimes whose potential use of foreign-manufactured arms is a source of fluctuating embarrassment to governments and their defence manufacturers.

The problem, of to whom it is appropriate to sell arms is not simply a moral one. Countries have strategic interests to protect and dense bureaucratic procedures surround the export of defence equipment.

British companies need government permission before sending even promotional material abroad, and approval for particular projects will pass through several ministries, including Defence, Trade and Industry, and the Foreign Office.

Certain countries, such as Burma, are the subject of a blanket ban. From Indonesia the Government has obtained a promise that British equipment will not be used to suppress civilian protests. "Do we feel the



Right on target: An employee of the Dutch science research organisation TNO displays a virtual reality system in Singapore

Photograph: AP

pinch on export licenses?" asks Rear-Admiral Sam Salt of the MoD Defence Export Services Organisation. "We have a very responsible attitude to export licences, and we do find that very restrictive."

British companies complain that the rules mean they lose out to rivals from less conscientious

countries. But most of those showing in Singapore were grateful the moral burden had been lifted from their shoulders. "It's not a decision we make," says Christopher Loney of GKN Westland, "and it's not one we are capable of making. In deciding who we sell to, we look to the Government. At the

corporate level there aren't really any moral judgements."

But companies are keen to avoid the taint of association with questionable regimes. With the demise of the Soviet bogey, liberal concern has centred on lesser regimes whose misdeeds might once have been overlooked. According to Admiral Salt, "the lobby groups are getting more vociferous".

This was demonstrated last summer when a group of peace campaigners were acquitted by a jury in Liverpool despite admitting they vandalised British Aerospace Hawk fighters bound for Indonesia; uncorroborated reports say Hawks have been used against independence fighters in the occupied territory of East Timor.

The rumour is that the new Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, intends to clamp down on arms trade with Indonesia.

The 82 British companies exhibiting in Singapore last week were keen to establish the liberal credentials of their hardware. "We're just out in the mainstream of suppression instruments", one helicopter manufacturer protested.

## Britain shoots for big stakes

Britain is the world's second-largest arms exporter, after the US and ahead of Russia, which suffered from the break-up of the Soviet Union and difficulties providing after-sales service. Britain captured a quarter of the world market last year, up from 16 per cent in 1994 and 19 per cent in 1995 - and the arms companies want to say that way. In no other export sector is Britain achieving anything like this proportion of the world market.

Arms exports earn Britain £5bn a year - between a third and a half of the total output of the British defence industry, which employs 360,000 people.

Besides financial earnings, military equipment goes hand-in-hand with support training teams and advisers, which help maintain international influence. The "responsible transfer" of defence equipment is consistent with Article 51 of the UN Charter, which recognises the inherent right of states to self-defence. The new government has said it will scrutinise future exports closely to prevent sales to repressive regimes but is not opposed to "responsible" exports. Indonesia - where it is alleged British aircraft have been used against people in East Timor - and where riot-control equipment has been used for repression - was an embarrassment for the previous

government, although the allegations that Hawks were used have been denied. All applications to export defence equipment are considered on a case-by-case basis. The final decision is with the Department of Trade and Industry, which seeks advice from the Ministry of Defence and Foreign Office. Also involved is the DTI's Export Credits Guarantee Department. East Asia is the world's third-largest arms-importing region, which receives 12 per cent of the world's arms after the Middle East, the largest, and Western Europe. Britain has strong ties with countries in the first two areas as part of its colonial legacy, and both are lucrative markets because of oil revenues and their expansion of the tiger economies of East Asia. The UK has 20 "priority markets", forecast to provide more than 80 per cent of future British defence equipment orders. The Defence Export Services Organisation, set up in 1966 to oversee a coherent strategy for arms exports, aims to prevent destructive competition, between British companies by selectively supporting only one company in cases where British chances of beating foreign competition would otherwise be damaged.

Christopher Bellamy

## The Link

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# Players shift ground in Zaire endgame

Ron Kampeas  
Associated Press

Libreville, Gabon (AP) — Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko remained in Gabon yesterday, fuelling speculation that he will choose exile rather than fly home as promised.

The ailing dictator, dying of cancer and losing a seven-month civil war, has agreed to long-delayed elections and has acknowledged he is too ill to be a candidate.

Despite assurances by his aides that Mr Mobutu would return to Kinshasa yesterday, diplomatic sources said he would remain in neighbouring Gabon for another night.

South Africa's Deputy President Thabo Mbeki was expected in Libreville last night for talks with the President. Mr Mbeki earlier in the day met rebel leader Laurent Kabila in the rebel-held southern city of Lubumbashi. Mr Mbeki said Mr Kabila had agreed to meet President Mobutu next Wednesday on board a South African naval vessel for a second round of peace talks.

On Thursday, Mr Mobutu met five other African leaders in Gabon and emerged with a document in which he called on his military to prepare the country for elections.

The pledge, signed by all six leaders, said Mr Mobutu, who is suffering from prostate cancer, was too ill to stand for the vote himself. The statement made no mention of Mr Mobutu resigning or giving power to a transitional authority that would include Mr Kabila, as the rebel chief has demanded.

Since promising a transition to democracy in 1990, Mr Mobutu has repeatedly postponed the country's first multiparty elections. But with mounting international pressure and the rebels closing in on the capital, he has in recent weeks repeated his promise.

In Kinshasa, pressure was increasing on Mr Mobutu to cede power. For the first time, political parties within the parliament announced their support for Mr Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation of Congo-Zaire.

A communiqué released in the capital said peaceful demands for democratic change had failed to produce results, or bring elections, and expressed support for armed struggle to put the country on the path toward free and fair elections.

"We proclaim our support for the Alliance's platform and call on the Alliance to use their weapons in a manner that will permit it to achieve the goals of

democracy", the communiqué read. The parties signing the communiqué, such as the National Federation of Christian Democrats and the Zairian Association of former National Police Officers and Agents, do not have much power in the transitional parliament. But it is the first time political parties have publicly supported Mr Kabila's use of arms.

Rebel foreign minister Bizima Karasa said in Lubumbashi yesterday that Mr Kabila was only going to meet President Mobutu to secure his resignation. He said the rebels would continue their military offensive on the capital until the 66-year-old dictator hands over power over to Mr Kabila.



Down the hatch: A naval veteran in St Petersburg yesterday celebrating the 52nd anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany

Photograph: Reuters

## US pretends it has a sound grip on the diplomacy

Mary Dejevsky  
Washington

A week of shuttle diplomacy in and around Zaire by the US special envoy, Bill Richardson, ended yesterday with little to show for it beyond a tentative "wait and see" and a gracious handing back of the problem to South Africa's leader Nelson Mandela. Mr Richardson, US ambassador to the United Nations, arrived in Washington via Paris on Thursday night, and was briefing US officials yesterday.

The ups and downs of Mr Richardson's African voyage seem to have convinced Washington there is a real risk of a bloody battle for Zaire's capital, Kinshasa, and that it would be unwise to rely on the rebel leader, Laurent Kabila, for a peaceful transfer of power, or for any subsequent period of stability based on democratic and free-market principles.

Over the past few days, US officials have broken an uneasy silence about Mr Kabila to give

reputation," said Mr Burns. "He needs to think about being a responsible person who can lead the government. In anticipation of that, he needs to think about ways to preserve life."

This is a far cry from the US mood when Mr Richardson set out for Zaire. Then, State Department-spun news broadcasts said the envoy was setting out to "ease" the conflict in Zaire. Now US ambitions are more modest. Officials set out a list of priorities for US diplomacy. They were to prevent bloodshed in Kinshasa in the event of a rebel takeover, to ensure the smooth repatriation of refugees to Rwanda, and to see human rights were respected.

The only refinement to this list is the hope that a peaceful transfer of power can be engineered by means of a "broad, inclusive transitional government" that would lead in democratic elections. Less than two months ago, Washington had confidently recommended elections before the rebel forces reached Kinshasa.

US officials are sensitive about suggestions that Washington was slow, accidentally or on purpose, to react to events in Zaire, or that it barged in on a peace-making show that belonged to Mr Mandela.

They deny Washington stood idly by, saying it initiated direct contacts with the rebels from an early stage. One possible channel, improbable though it sounds, may have been the television evangelist, Pat Robertson, who made a number of trips to rebel-held areas in private planes, ostensibly to see about his mineral interests.

Another unofficial envoy, confirmed by diplomatic sources, was President Clinton's wife, Hillary, who was charged with conveying the message that the US would be "helpful" where it could be "helped" when she met Mr Mobutu on her African tour last month.

There is a sense in Washington, too, that reports of fiction with the rebels, such as the US is taking a Francoist role as regional power-broker. The French ambassador in Zaire was positively not invited to the Mobutu-Kabila talks and diplomatic sources in Washington predict difficulties with Paris if the "broad, inclusive transitional government" favoured by the US excludes all Mobutu associates.

There is consolation for France. While the end of President Mobutu's rule spells the end of France's dominant role in Central Africa, the inconclusive results of Mr Richardson's diplomacy make it premature to talk of the US taking over that position.



Richardson: Not much to show for his African odyssey

a decidedly ambivalent, if not negative, assessment. Reference is made to his Marxist past, inexperience of government and his "unreliability".

Some of this may stem from the rebel leader's decision not to turn up on the first day of talks with President Mobutu last week, after extravagant efforts had been made to transfer an ill and reluctant Mr Mobutu to the ship for the talks venue.

Mr Kabila's non-appearance was all the worse for the US because Mr Richardson had helped in broker the meeting and presented it as a breakthrough. Whatever the reason, through American comments seem to mark a cooling in Washington's appraisal of Mr Kabila, and of Zaire's chances

of a peaceful transfer to democracy under his leadership. The State Department spokesman, Nicholas Burns, even went on record to urge Mr Kabila to show responsibility.

"Mr Kabila understands what's at stake for him is his

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# international

## May poll may be a pont too far for canny Jacques

### PARIS DAYS

The workmen next door to the office have stopped their ceaseless drilling. The children rarely seem to go to school. Black, the peripatetic school rabbit, has moved in with us for a five-day weekend. There is a luxurious choice of parking places in the street.

The newspaper kiosk on the corner is closed. So, tragically, is the patisserie next door. It is, in short, Paris in the month of May.

August is the laziest month in France; but May is the odd-est. The month is punctuated by official 24-hour holidays - May Day, Ascension Day, Pentecost.

It is further cluttered by *ponts*, which are like the Pont d'Avignon, bridges to nowhere: official and unofficial extra days of holiday, which join up the real holidays with the weekends.

Thus this week there were only two days of school. Thursday was a religious holiday (Ascension Day). Friday was a *pont*. Wednesday was thrown in for good measure.

Last week, with May Day falling on Thursday, Friday became a *pont* and there were three days of school. Next week is normal. The following week, with Pentecost on the Tuesday and a *pont* on the Monday, school is down to three days again. Charlie cannot believe his luck: three half-term holidays in the same month.

The same pattern is repeated throughout the civil service (which invented *ponts*) and much of business and industry, especially in the capital. The provinces appear to work a little harder. The *ponts*, it is maintained, regularise what would otherwise be a chaotic situation. Hundreds of thousands of people would take the bridging days off anyway.

The result is that much of the country spends the month in a kind of twilight between work and leisure; barely recovered from one long weekend of traffic jams and relatives before it is time to dive into another. May is, notoriously, a thankless time to conduct business in France. If your business is with the administration, and anything out of the routine, you might as well forget it until June.

If so happens, however, that this particular month of May, the French nation is trying to conduct an important piece of business with itself.

In the parliamentary elections on 25 May and 1 June, it must decide whether to continue with one of the least popular governments since polling began, or turn to the left. (Anything familiar there?)

It so happens that most of the campaign falls in the talk-to-met month of May, one of the worst possible times to call an election. Or rather: it does not just so happen.



Leap of faith: Chirac's play of holding the election in France's oddest month could backfire on the ruling coalition

Photograph: Geraint Lewis

President Jacques Chirac, it is widely believed, picked those dates deliberately. The initial plan was to have the statutory two rounds of polling on 1 June and 8 June. The President chose to have the heart of the campaign carved up by long weekends, which would make it difficult for the opposition parties to build up any momentum,

or consistently attract the attention of the French people. The President is a calculating man but he has a history of electoral miscalculations. In one sense, the campaign is going exactly as he expected: nowhere. All around the country, candidates report that their meetings are poorly attended; volunteers hard to come by. One opinion

poll last week reported that 51 per cent of the electorate had little or no interest in the election. Just down our street, there is a primary school which will be a polling station. It has been fenced around by vast steel temporary noticeboards to discourage candidates from fly-posting. At this stage the boards would normally be a colourful

jumble of earnest faces and vacuous slogans ("Let's change the future"). "A shared leap forward". At the last count, there were two posters, one severely ripped. Apathy and lethargy, Mr Chirac calculated, would be agents of the government. They would freeze the opinion-poll lead of the centre-right and ben-

efit incumbent members of the National Assembly, four-fifths of whom are members of the governing coalition. But three weeks into the election, opinion polls are drifting towards the left. It is the government's campaign which seems most heated. A nervousness, approaching panic, is haunting the centre-right. Mr

Chirac, who was supposed to be above the fray this time, joined in the campaign this week, earlier than expected. It was as if a football manager had run on to the pitch in his sheepskin coat and tried to head in a corner.

The time of year is not the only explanation for the lifelessness of the campaign. The French remain in a morose and pessimistic mood. The Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, is a poor campaigner, and thoroughly disliked. The Socialist leader, Lionel Jospin, is a good campaigner, with a dated and unconvincing programme.

The bridges of May are taking their toll, however. The President called the election, nine months before he needed to, because he said the country needed a new *elan*. As one semi-dissident, senior figure in Mr Chirac's camp said this week: "The problem is that to have *elan*, to take a leap forward, you need a run-up. For a run-up you need a clear runway. Every time we take a run, we fall over all these *ponts*."

Next week, a full week, without holidays, will be crucial. Afterwards, the nation will plunge into Pentecost, which may be a *pont* too far. As *Le Monde* pointed out, this last long week ends, for many, on 21 May, four days before the first round. Four days to overcome apathy and boredom. The President hoped a stop-start campaign would lock in his side's advantage; he may have turned the election into a lottery.

John Lichfield

## Cook's tour stirs Italian anxieties

Inna Karacs  
Bonn

Just over a week in power and the new British government has already made an enemy in Europe. No, for once London's emissary, Robin Cook, got on splendidly with the French and the Germans. This time, Italy is the offended party, driven into a sulk by the Continent's self-appointed rulers.

Rome is miffed by the Foreign Secretary's suggestion that Britain was ready to play a leading role in Europe, hecoming one of the points in a "triangle" that would supersede the Franco-German axis. "Perhaps Minister Cook doesn't yet fully understand the rules of the European Union, where, fortunately, there are no leading countries and no countries are led," an Italian official was quoted as saying. He then undermined his argument by declaring: "There are four major countries, and all of them are in a position of absolute parity." Guess which is the fourth country.

There are four major countries, and they all are in perfect parity

Italy is entitled to its opinion, but the vehemence of its reaction merely underlines that London's pretensions are not to be dismissed lightly. However loud the second division may howl, Britain is truly back in the heart of Europe, ready to occupy the chair at the top table left vacant by the previous government.

As illustrated by this week's tripartite statement on land mines, that is political reality. All that remains is to formalise the new relationship, preferably without provoking more Italian-style outbursts.

In the wake of Mr Cook's triumphant visit, Bonn has already started moving the goal posts. Werner Hoyer, the European Affairs Minister who used to be a reliable source of Anglophobic comment, led the way into the geometry lesson: "The concept of the Bonn-Paris axis was already somewhat dangerous, because the other [countries] could easily feel excluded." Mr Hoyer told German radio the day after the Foreign Secretary's departure: "We must now be careful not to snub

the others by creating a London-Paris-Bonn triangle. "However, it is naturally a good thing that the silent alliance of the past between Britain and Germany should, once again, become somewhat louder and more visible. And if we bring that into harmony with Paris, that can only benefit the European Union and our co-operation in Nato."

It is interesting to note that, rather than slotting London into the existing relationship, Mr Hoyer appears to be looking to accommodate Paris on the revived London-Bonn axis. Though German officials would not put it so bluntly in public, Bonn is growing exasperated with its French ally, and believes it will have more in common with a Blair government.

The major fault line in Europe lies not between Britain and Germany but between Germany and France, a senior German government advisor told *The Independent* yesterday. Bonn sees itself as a champion of free trade, allied with Britain on important issues, such as the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, the single market and Nato's role.

On economic issues, France adheres to rigid dirigiste policies which Germany finds outdated, and in the security domain Paris still refuses to play a team role in Nato. "If these tensions were not resolved, the whole community could come to a standstill," the official warns. The Germans point out that the "triangle" has already been working well in Bosnia, where, after initial disagreements, the three countries took charge of the European peace-keeping effort. In defence and the development of a European arms industry, Britain is the leading force in the EU and is Germany's closest ally.

There are, of course, big areas of disagreement between London and Bonn, and between London and Paris. "We agree with Germans about policy and with the French about European institutions," says a British official.

Balancing these differences in a three-cornered relationship will make European affairs even more complex than they are today, and there are bound to be a few surprises along the way. The closest Euro-sceptics from Scandinavia, no longer able to hide behind their British mentor, will have to come out.

And the small countries that have been complaining ever more loudly about the overbearing Franco-German axis will have to accept that the boss classes have a new member. Just don't tell the Italians.

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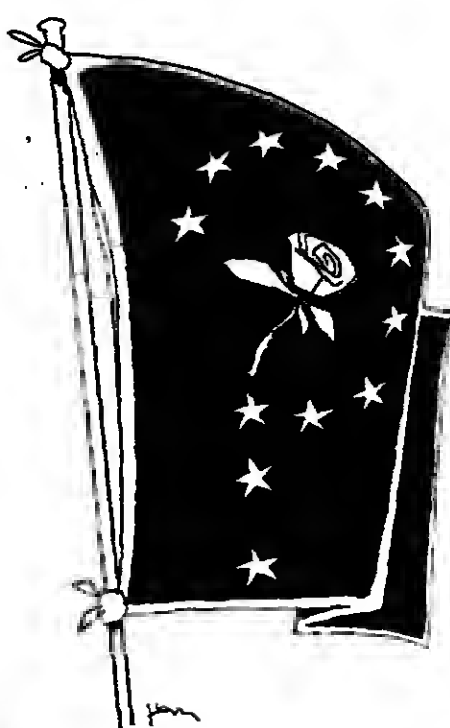
# The currency question is not spent

You almost certainly did not notice, but yesterday was Europe Day, celebrating the anniversary of the historic speech in 1950 in which the French statesman Robert Schuman proposed an integrated European coal and steel community. The French, ever enamoured of the stylish gesture, marked the occasion with much trumpeting of the brave new euro, with blue and gold European flags festooning Paris buses and even free Euro-drinks at a generous bar in Chancery. Instinctively more pragmatic, Britain took a less spectacular approach, as Mr Blair held talks at Downing Street with the Dutch Prime Minister, Wim Kok, the most likely broker of a deal between Britain and its partners at the forthcoming Amsterdam summit. But the cause for rejoicing is no less. Labour's victory has brought us in from the European cold, and for the first time in ages eyes across the Channel look to this country with fascination, hope and – dare one say it – admiration. As the rush of local claimants to the Blair mantle in France, Germany and beyond shows, the election result has the potential to revitalise and reshape the European left.

Unlike Bill Clinton, who occupies a comparable place in the American political spectrum, but is shackled by

Republican control of Congress, the Prime Minister's huge majority gives him a rare chance to forge a new brand of European centre-left politics. The first impact could be felt as soon as 25 May, in France, where President Chirac's gamble in calling early elections looks more perilous by the day. But the consequences might be even more momentous in 1998 in Germany, where Labour's success offers the Social Democrats something that has eluded them for 16 years – a formula for ending the rule of Helmut Kohl.

A fresh spring in the step is no less visible at the Foreign Office, long constrained to defend barren Tory policies which ran against every instinct of its soul, quite apart from rendering all but irrelevant the diplomat's cherished art of deal-making. "Nothing succeeds like political success in changing the dynamics of a negotiation," declared one jubilant official the other day as he surveyed the first 100 hours of Robin Cook's Foreign Secretaryship: "Domestic strength does mean foreign policy strength." We shall see. The new government's swift adherence to the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty notwithstanding, the changes thus far have been mood, not substance. Unarguably, however, the Foreign Office is back in business – and there is much business to be done.



In the short term, the outlines of a possible bargain in Amsterdam have become clearer this week. The beef ban seems set to be lifted, and that would be a more than symbolic blessing born of the new mood. Britain would be granted permanent exemption from plans to abolish European Union border controls, and integrationist Franco-German designs for European defence would be put on ice. In return this country would accept a – modest extension of majority voting. The prime uncertainty surrounds quota-hopping. But for all the campaign thunder on the issue, Labour in government has carefully avoided threatening to block an overall deal if it does not secure satisfaction on fish catches. Increasingly, Amsterdam looks a summit condemned to succeed.

Still to be addressed, though, is the matter of monetary union. Ah, murmur the wise men at the Foreign Office, but the federalist tide in France and Germany is starting to recede. Perhaps, but nothing is more federal than a shared currency and its management. Labour will not join in the first wave, but, like the Tories in their less immediate days, promises an open mind thereafter. In this stance they are right, as were their predecessors. The common currency might just work – but it would be

better not to experiment. The benefits of the single currency venture abandoned are mostly symbolic, at worst it could turn into an anti-democratic strait-jacket. Alas, barring a deadly broadside from the Bundesbank or a reversal of French public opinion, the scheme seems likely to go ahead in 1999 – not least because of the misguided "bicycle theory" which holds that if the vehicle of European integration ceases to move forward, the riders will fall off.

Unlike the Conservatives, whose stubbornness on other issues generated such ill will that no one in Europe listened even when they did have a point, Labour will doubtless gain a hearing, if only from delight that Margaret Thatcher's Euro-sceptic successors have left the stage. But the final outcome will surely be the same, and sometime early in the next millennium, a first or second Blair administration will have to make up its mind on whether to join. Mr Cook vows that Britain will take its proper place alongside France and Germany in European affairs. But how can it belong to the inner triangle, if it shuns the scheme that, for better or worse, has become the yardstick of European progress? Governments come and governments go. But even in this sun-lit honeymoon for Labour, the European dilemma will not.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Real value of nursery vouchers

Sir: You report ("New ministers keep their promises", 7 May) that David Blunkett is to set about abolishing the nursery voucher scheme and to return the funding to schools directly. Those of us who have been forced to implement Tory cuts to schools' budgets over recent years will be watching very closely to see exactly what this means.

It is important to understand that the nursery voucher scheme was, in fact, a cut in school funding. Before the scheme was introduced, each "rising five" child who came to a primary school's reception class or nursery unit brought with him or her a certain amount of funding from the local education authority. In Devon, that amount was around £1,500. When the voucher scheme was introduced this sum was clawed back from the school's budget and replaced by the £1,100 represented by the voucher: a *de facto* cut of £400 per child. The figures vary around

the country, but in every case the net result was a cut in school budgets.

If Mr Blunkett returns only the value of the voucher to our schools, he will be endorsing a Tory education cut, and this will be an act of betrayal to all of us who, in a spirit of guarded optimism, voted for his party and hoped for a level of school funding that was at least operable. What we expect from him, at the very least, is a return to the level of funding per child that existed before the introduction of vouchers.

Beyond that, we expect him to reduce the size of all primary school classes, not just those of five- to seven-year-olds. It may be that this would mean breaking the Labour promises of low taxation; for that, we might well be prepared to forgive him.

MAL PEET  
Vice-Chairman of Governors  
Exeter Road Primary School  
Exmouth, Devon

### NCT must remain free from commercial interests

Sir: I can reassure your correspondent, Steve Hickman (Letters, 7 May), that the disquiet over the National Childbirth Trust's links with Sainsbury's is not an attempt to prevent the manufacture, sale or use of formula milk. This is a legitimate activity, and I fully support parents' choices over infant feeding. I would like to see all parents being able to make an informed choice, and for me that means that their choice should be free from influence by commercial interests.

I hope that Mr Hickman and his partner felt that their breastfeeding counselling was a source of independent information, and this is what I fear has been lost by the NCT accepting sponsorship from an infant formula manufacturer. This is why so many counsellors will leave unless this issue can be resolved. If we cannot provide the independent service we feel parents deserve, we will provide it elsewhere.

MARY K BROADFOOT  
PHYLL BUCHANAN  
National Childbirth Trust  
Breastfeeding Counsellors  
Paisley, Renfrewshire

Sir: It is heartbreaking to watch the NCT be torn apart when it has provided more support for parents through childbirth and early years than any other organisation ("NCT in crisis over Sainsbury sponsorship", 6 May). After all this is only so much an overburdened NHS can do and the NCT has worked hard in hand with the NHS to create more choice in childbirth and make it a better experience.

There are many of us at the local level who have spent rewarding years organising ante-natal classes, breast-feeding support, social events and other services to ease the transition from giving birth into parenthood, which can otherwise be a very isolating time for many mothers. We can only look on with sadness and ask those at the centre to reflect on two points of commonsense managerial practice, which seem to have been overlooked in recent decision-making.

First, not only have they made huge increases in local membership fees, which is a recipe for self-extinction, but such changes have been foisted on members without

proper consultation. In the same way that many unions and professional associations have had to become more democratically accountable to the members over the last 20 years, so must the NCT have an overhaul of its approach to accountability and participation.

Second, these changes have been made to support an increasingly top-heavy centralised operation, undermining the strength of local branches who are the mainstay in delivering services to the community. This flies in the face of good managerial practice as other organisations move to thin managerial hierarchies and decentralise and empower those at the front line.

Only by being less defensive and listening to local members can it rebuild the trust and faith that we have had in the past, and become again the dynamic organisation it has always been.  
Dr DIANA WINSTANLEY  
Director  
Health Management Programme  
Imperial College Management School  
London SW7

### Mexico's model political system

Sir: Phil Davison states that Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party most resembles "the old Soviet Communist Party" due to its long-standing rule (8 May). This fails to acknowledge that for more than 20 years Mexicans have built a strong system of political parties and have enacted an electoral legislation that combines first-past-the-post with proportional representation – which the UK is only beginning to explore.

Mexico's constitution prevents any single party from being over-represented by more than 9 per cent. In order to secure a majority of 251 seats (out of 500) a party must have received at least 42 per cent of the vote. For the past two general elections – and in nearly 50 local ones – no serious irregularities have emerged, and all political parties now have fair access to the media, with an independent judiciary as the supreme electoral authority. The fruits of these reforms are there for all to see: over 35 million Mexicans live in states ruled by parties other than the one which has retained the majority at the national level, in clear recognition of local political trends.

I must also point out that the mayor of Mexico City has never been, as Mr Davison suggests, "hand-picked" by the ruling party. Indeed, the fact that the inhabitants of Mexico City are about to elect their Governor should confirm the depth of the reforms carried out under President Zedillo's administration.

SANTIAGO ONATE  
Ambassador, Embassy of Mexico  
London W1

### Reasons behind Tory election swings

Sir: I have long supported your correspondents' case for compulsory voting (Letters, 7 May). The outcome of the county council elections on 1 May makes me hesitate. The normal turnout at such elections is 35-40 per cent – from voters with a knowledge and interest in local government. In recent years in the shires this has produced a distinct move towards the Liberal Democrats.

On 1 May, because of the co-incidental general election, the county turnout rose to 75 per cent. Most of these extra shire "Tory tendency" voters, with little appreciation of county council issues, either stayed "true blue" or protested by voting for – and I quote from a voter – "that nice safe Mr Blair". Hence the Tory county council gains.

The natural turnout at county elections will only improve by switching funding progressively from central government to the council tax payers and by better media coverage and their recognition that council elections exist in their own right and are not simply an opinion survey on the popularity of central government.

JOHN PALMER  
Councillor  
East Hampshire District Council  
Portsmouth, Hampshire

Sir: Linda Cockshaw (Letters, 7 May) encapsulates the essence of why the Tories lost the election and why it had very little to do with a "split party" or "time for a change".

I too, like the other 53,732 businesses that failed in 1993, had a life's endeavour ruined and old-age security jeopardised. Unlike the Hamiltons of Tanton, I did not receive a resettlement and winding-up allowances. Instead, I received within two days of my receivership a demand from the bank to pay the insidious guarantee elicited from me during the recession.

There can't have been many voters, since the beginning of the 1990s, who have not been "touched" directly, or through acquaintance, by unemployment, business failure or house repossession. Vast numbers of voters have been traumatised by Tory policies. Yet time and again their public statements, contrary to the self-evident truths around them, beggared belief in credibility.

Neil Hamilton's statement that the loss of one's career "is akin to bereavement" is quite correct. May I say to those outgoing Tories who will now have to "get on their bikes" to seek alternative employment "that never in the endeavours of a post-war administration have so many sacrificed so much because of so few."

ALAN BERSFORD  
Bushey, Hertfordshire

### Why not give the UK electronic voting?

Sir: Present during the counting of votes, I was worried at what I saw: clumsy fingers on horry hands, hesitantly sorting the papers and (occasionally) putting them into the wrong piles.

I spoke to a party official. I was told that there was no cause for concern as the counting procedure incorporated checks. These checks were not performed at every table.

An electronic system of vote-casting would avoid most errors. The manpower savings must be immense: the number of people needed to print, collect, transport and count the votes could be reduced and much time saved. Electronic voting has, I believe, been used elsewhere satisfactorily. Why not here?

H B GOULD  
Guildford, Surrey

### Advantages of youth for Tory party

Sir: It is understandable that William Hague is the favourite to take the Tory leadership. The average age in the Conservative Party is 64 and rising. As he is a mere 36, Mr Hague could well be one of the few Tory members who are still alive if and when the Conservative Party regains power.

PAUL WALTER  
Newbury, Berkshire

Sir: I refer to Colin Brown's article "Howard's champagne pact goes flat" (7 May) in which he told us that William Hague is 36, his girlfriend 28. I am disappointed that he did not tell us the ages of the others, namely, Michael Howard and his wife, Sandra, Kenneth Clarke, John Redwood, "one Redwood campaign supporter", "one of Mr Howard's supporters", and most importantly, the champagne.

PETER BURNETT  
Pebworth, Stratford on Avon

## LETTER from THE EDITOR

After a week in which the transfer of power has been so stark that Westminster feels like Saigon-on-Thames, two anecdotes only. I met Michael Foot in celebratory mood at an outdoor party. There is talk of Labour's cautious economic programme. "I'm not cautious," roars Foot suddenly. "Put up taxes, I say. Put 'em UP [skywards jab of stick] and up... the higher the better!" A New Labour couple swivel, mouths flapping open with glorious Bateman-esque expressions of horror.

A few days later, I meet Alan Howarth, the former Tory minister who defected to Labour and was elected under new colours this month. As an education minister, he tells me, he finds himself sitting in the same chair behind the same desk as he last occupied when education minister in John Major's government. Strange days.

As a Proust-lover (and therefore a member of a small, fanatical, quasi-religious sect) I have news of great moment: Penguin has barnily and delightfully embarked on a complete new translation of the great work. It will owe nothing to the marvellous original C K Scott-Moncrieff translation – whose instantly recognisable slim blue volumes have changed many lives and can be glimpsed in one of David Hockney's new flower paintings at the Annelly Juda gallery in London.

The "new Proust" will even have a different name: instead of the Shakespearean "Remembrance of Things Past" (which Proust himself was never happy with) it will be called, more accurately, "In Search of Lost Time". Six translators are now engaged in the mammoth task, under the direction of Christopher Prendergast of King's College, Cambridge, and they hope to publish the hardback three-volume version from Allen Lane in 2000.

Meanwhile, Penguin is to establish a Web-site for Proustians to compare translations. They will also republish Scott-Moncrieff's version this October. I should also mention that Alain de Botton's just-published *How Proust Can Change Your Life* is the

It's the funniest book I have read for ages – a self-help manual based on Proust's life and works. This may seem bonkers. It is

a long feature about Heather Ripley, who played Dick Van Dyke's flower-haired daughter in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

It turns out that she is an eco-protester in the Swampy mould, living on a Scottish farm. The film broke up her parents' marriage and condemned her to loneliness during filming in London and then on the television celebrity circuit as a child star.

But 30 years ago, before that, the stunningly beautiful Heather sat in front of me at school. She was the first girl I had something like a crush on. Being a typical Scottish male, however, I was unable to express my feelings other than by leaning over and repeatedly yanking her spectacular golden pigtail until she cried. I got the strap. She went off to be a film star. Life seemed hard. But maybe I had the best of it after all.

Andrew Marr

### QUOTE UNQUOTE

We are not the masters. The people are the masters. We are the people's servants – Tony Blair, to Labour MPs

Trade unions are employers. We don't run our organisations like some kind of hippie commune – Alan Johnson, general secretary of the Union of Communication Workers, and now a Labour MP

I knew that politics would bring many strange experiences, but nothing in life can prepare a man to make small talk to a transsexual hair cage – Martin Bell, MP for Totton, on meeting Miss Monopenny, the 7ft transsexual candidate with a cage on her head

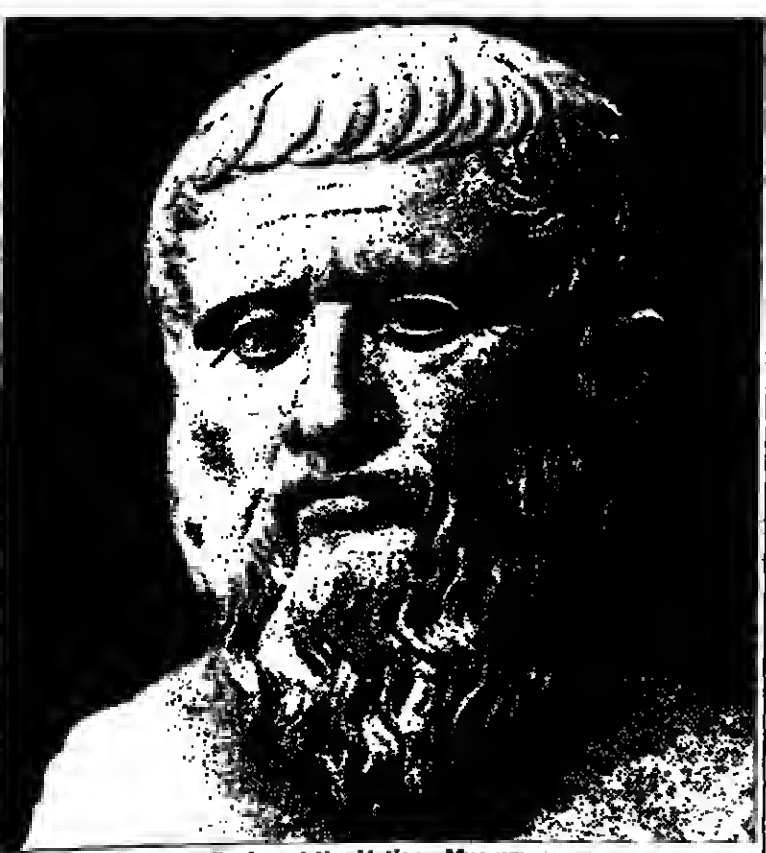
All contributions will be gratefully received – Neil Hamilton, former MP, contemplating his financial future

My mother had her formula for avoiding such a nightie nightmare. She dressed and slapped on the make-up before she said "Good morning" to even a red box – Carol Thatcher, on Cherie Blair being photographed in her night attire at her front door

Dear Mr Eleventh – opening line of a computerised letter sent to the 11th Earl of Coventry

He is such an important part of my life that if I die before him I want a little bit of my ashes put in his food so that I can finally live inside him – Drew Barrymore, actress, on her devotion to her cat

Only the English would call it slush. The Italians wouldn't call it slush. Nor would the Irish. What you call slush I call emotive melody – Chris Rea, singer-songwriter



A bust of Plato, on display at the Vatican Museum

### Plato's training for rulers of the state

Sir: Plato in *The Republic* demands that the rulers of the state should live and be housed so that their dwellings are open to all citizens and that they should live as men under strict military training and discipline (Letters, "Socratic road to political wisdom", 7 May).

Their food is to be provided by the other citizens as an agreed wage for the duties they perform as Guardians, and it should be suitable for brave men living under military

training and discipline. They are not allowed to handle money, nor to possess silver or gold. They must eat together in messes and live like soldiers in camp, although they must have enough provision to enable them to do their duty and not be tempted to prey upon the community.

Strange, I don't seem to have seen MPs living like that.  
PAMELA DONOHUE  
Sheffield

### Don't let the critics dismiss Helfgott

Sir: Before listening to David Helfgott at the Royal Festival Hall on Monday ("He shone", 8 May), I went along to see the "Modern Art in Britain 1910-14" exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery. The exhibition is showing works of art as acknowledged as great nowadays, despite an unfavourable reaction by the critics when originally shown.

I don't suggest that Helfgott will be looked back on as brilliant, but perhaps when we experience the different interpretations of the current norm, we should use them to question accepted views, rather than dismissing them.

MICK PALMER  
Harpenden, Hertfordshire

### The 'hidden suffering' behind abortion

Sir: George Gagner's anger (Letters, 8 May) at Cardinal Hume's comparison between the campaign to outlaw slavery and our duty to abolish "abortion virtually on demand" may stem from a misunderstanding.

The Cardinal described abortion as a scandal "not only because of the destruction of human life, but also because of the hidden suffering of so many women". He was not saying that each woman who has an abortion is forced to do so, although many say afterwards that they were not acting with complete freedom.

Millions were forced into slavery in the last century. Nowadays, force is

being used against millions of living, developing and defenceless human lives. What actually happens in abortion is truly horrible; the broadcasters refused to screen a pro-life film which, the Cardinal said, is shocking but not as shocking as the reality. Until most of us know much more than we do at present about these harsh realities, we cannot claim that there is a well-informed public opinion, on which our public legislation is based.

HUGH LINDSAY  
Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria  
The writer was Roman Catholic Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, 1974-92

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. (Fax: 0171-293 2054; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) and include a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.



# Karl-Uwe von Hassel

Karl-Uwe von Hassel was regarded as an outstanding representative of the Protestant majority of the north German Christian Democratic Union (CDU). His first top job was as Minister-President, or head of government, of Schleswig-Holstein, in 1954-62. He was campaign manager in the election of 1961. Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's last, in which the Christian Democrats lost ground due to the Berlin Wall crisis of August. But when the overweight, highly intelligent Catholic Bavarian Franz Josef Strauss was forced out of office as Defence Minister in 1962, the slender, averagely intelligent northerner replaced him. Von Hassel had a good military pedigree which must have been some comfort to the traditional wing of the West German armed forces, the Bundeswehr.

Von Hassel's grandfather Friedrich Hassel distinguished himself as a Lieutenant-General in the Prussian army in the war against Denmark in 1864. For this he was ennobled gaining the coveted "von". Uwe-Kai von Hassel's father, Theodor, served in the German colonial army in Tanganyika, East Africa, then a German colony, before becoming a planter in 1909. Theodor von Hassel had his three farms expropriated when Britain took over Tanganyika at the end of the First World War. The family had to leave East Africa, where Uwe-Kai was born, the third of five children, in 1913.

Later Uwe-Kai von Hassel followed his father back to Tanganyika after completing grammar school and agricultural

management training in Schleswig-Holstein. There he worked as a plantation trader until he was interned after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

In 1940 he was exchanged and returned to Germany, where his knowledge of languages led to his recruitment into the German army intelligence corps evaluating British radio signals. As a lieutenant of the reserve he served in Italy, where he was awarded the War Service Medal First Class, and where he was made a prisoner-of-war of the British after the German surrender in 1945.

He was soon on his way back to Germany to work in the housing department in Flensburg. He joined the CDU in 1946 and climbed the ladder to political success in an area which was naturally conservative, and had to cope with large numbers of refugees from the lost territories. In many places the refugees outnumbered the natives. In 1950 33 per cent of the population of Schleswig-Holstein were expellees and a further 5.2 per cent were refugees from the Soviet Zone. He and his wife, Elfriede, a German from Samoa, could understand their misery. They soon elected him Mayor of Glücksburg and, in 1953, their MP.

As Minister of Defence von Hassel attempted to improve the poor image of the armed forces. He took over a force which had expanded too quickly and was suffering from an identity crisis. Which of the old German military traditions could the new, democratically controlled Bundeswehr endorse

and promote? The politicians pushed strongly for the idea of the soldier as the citizen in uniform who could take his grievances to a Parliamentary Defence Commissioner. They honoured the names of the July 1944 plotters against Hitler. Many of the generals seemed to want a continuation of the Wehrmacht's way of doing things.

A tidal wave hit the Establishment in 1964, when Vice-Admiral Hellmut Heye, the Parliamentary Defence Commissioner and former CDU MP, raised serious doubts about where the Bundeswehr was going. He thought there was a danger of its becoming a "state within the state". He exposed the brutal treatment received by some national servicemen. Like von Hassel, from a distinguished military family, the Admiral did not get the support he expected from the Defence Minister and resigned.

On 1 July 1965 von Hassel published his decree, largely written by officers and civil servants, on military tradition and came under attack from Right and Left. It was a compromise

compelled by the origins of the new armed forces.

As this controversy was going on another bit von Hassel. The German air force was equipped in 1961 with US-designed, but German-built Lockheed F-104G fighter-bombers. Over a four-year period 66 crashed and 36 pilots were killed. Up to 1973, 157 crashed and half their pilots, including von Hassel's son Joachim, did not survive. There was much public debate, with von Hassel being blamed for purchasing them rather than the French Mirage. He narrowly avoided being forced to resign.

The air-force chief, General Heinz Panitzki, resigned to protest about the failure to improve the safety equipment of the F104. The Inspector General of the Bundeswehr, the highest-ranking officer, General Heinz Trettnar, went in August because he disagreed with the concept of the citizen in uniform. The final straw for him was a decree allowing the public service trade union to recruit members among soldiers and civil employees of the MoD.

The fall of Ludwig Erhard's Christian Democratic / Free Democratic coalition led to the setting up of the grand coalition of Christian Democrats with the main opposition Social Democrats (SPD), in December 1966. In this new government of Kurt Georg Kiesinger (CDU), von Hassel served as Minister for Refugees and Expellees. This was no easy ministry. By December 1960 25 per cent, over 13 million, of the West German population, excluding West Berlin, were expellees or refugees. Their integration was a miracle. The Far Right NPD, a rising force at the time, sought to exploit their resentment. Von Hassel's job was to recognise their concerns without tipping over into nationalism. He did reasonably well in navigating this minefield of legitimate grievances and unrealistic aspirations watched carefully by the foreign media.

The fall of the Christian Democrats in September 1969 did not end von Hassel's career. He was elected President of the Bundestag, a position he held until 1972, after which he served as Deputy President until 1976. He failed in his bid to seek re-



Portrait of von Hassel by Karsh of Ottawa Photograph: Camera Press

**David Childs**  
Karl-Uwe von Hassel, politician: born Gars, Tanganyika 21 April 1913; Minister-President of Schleswig-Holstein 1954-63; Minister of Defence, Federal Republic of Germany 1963-66; for Refugees and Expellees 1966-69; President of Bundestag 1969-72; Vice-President 1972-76; President, European Union of Christian Democrats 1973-80; Vice-President 1980-84; MEP 1979-84; married 1940 Elfriede Fröhlich (died 1971; one daughter, and one son deceased); 1972 Dr Monika Weichert (one son); died Aachen, Germany 8 May 1997.

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## Brian Wenham

Brian Wenham held many of the top posts in BBC Television before becoming managing director of BBC Radio, but it was in Independent Television that he started and finished his broadcasting career. He was highly civilised with a sharp wit and an acerbic manner which perhaps hampered his promotion to the very top positions for which he strove.

Wenham's father died of a heart attack at the age of 32 when his son was only eight. When Wenham himself had a first heart attack at the age of 34, just after two gruelling years editing *Panorama*, Sir Charles Curran, then the BBC Director-General, told him: "I have invested a lot of confidence in you, so bloody well stay alive."

Wenham read *History at St John's College, Oxford, and gained a first class degree. He did his National Service as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Fusiliers and then taught at a private school in Virginia. He returned to England and for the next seven years worked in Independent Television. His various jobs with ITN included Lobby Correspondent, American Correspondent and editor/producer of *Dateline Westminster*. For four years he worked as a freelance, producing *Strikes for Peace* and *Power of the Dollar* for ABC and *News at Ten* for ITN. He was also the London correspondent of the *New Republic* in the United States.*

He was then recruited by the BBC to edit *Panorama* in succession to Jeremy Isaacs. He is remembered by his colleagues of those days as a laid-back,



Wenham: laid-back genius Photograph: BBC

warm-hearted genius, one who always wore an astrakhan cap which made him look like a Pakistani guerrilla. He also conveyed instructions and congratulations to his staff in terse messages written on sticky pads, known as "Wenhamgrams". After two years he was made Head of the Current Affairs Group following a major reorganisation in the wake of the controversial *Yesterday's Men* programme which had so enraged Harold Wilson.

He was promoted next to become the Controller of BBC2. Channel 4 was then looming and Wenham had to remedy any weakness in the upmarket niche. He managed to increase the BBC2 audience by 50 per cent and was duly rewarded by being made Director of Programmes with a seat on the Board of Management, under the overall direction of Bill Cotton, the TV managing director.

When Alasdair Milne was the Director-General he wished to put Wenham in charge of all the news and current affairs programmes but Wenham did not want to take on the task. His reasons were never clear, for he certainly had the experience. Instead he became the managing director of Radio, a medium in which he had never worked before, in succession to Richard Francis.

He made a success of what he always used to refer to as "the wireless". But he was out of favour with the new BBC management and in 1988 he opted for premature retirement. He went back to Independent Television as a consultant and a non-executive director of Carlton Television.

### Leonard Miall

Brian George Wenham, media consultant and broadcasting executive: born 9 February 1937; television journalist, *Independent Television News* 1963-69; Editor *Panorama*, BBC 1969-71; Head of Current Affairs Group 1971-78; Controller BBC2 1978-82; Director of Programmes, BBC TV 1983-85; managing director, BBC Radio 1986-87; chairman, UK Radio Developments 1993-97; married 1966 Elisabeth Woolley (two daughters); died Weybridge, Surrey 8 May 1997.

## Narciso Yepes

May I add a footnote to the obituary of Narciso Yepes (6 May)? writes Salvador Bacarisse. Colin Cooper refers to the music for the film *La Fille aux yeux d'or* as having been composed by Yepes. It was in fact composed by my father, Salvador Bacarisse (1898-1963), who was, like many of the musical "Generacion of 1927", at that time exiled from Franco's Spain in Paris.

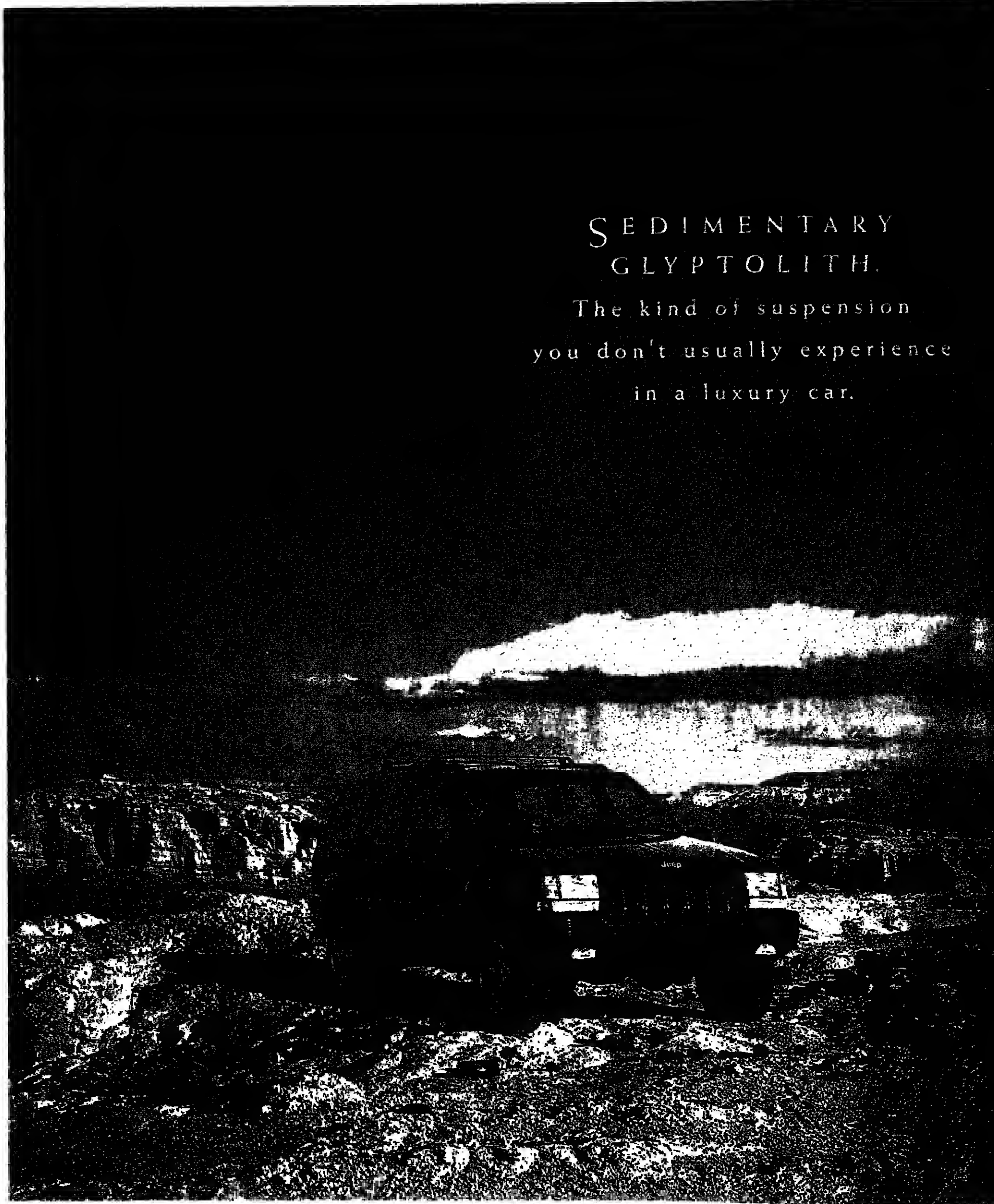
Narciso Yepes had long been an admirer of my father's music (a catalogue published in Madrid in 1990 lists over 100

works), and my father had in fact written the guitar Concertino en la memoria for Yepes in 1952 - a work played and recorded by Yepes on many occasions. When Yepes, who was not a composer, was requested to compose the music for *La Fille aux yeux d'or* he asked my father whether he would write it without declaring his authorship.

Yepes, unlike my father, was well known at the time. The correspondence between the two, in my possession, leaves this in no doubt.

Eugene Vale, author, died Los Angeles 2 May, aged 81. Spent 21 years writing the best-seller *The 13th Apostle* (1959). Screen-

plays include *A Global Affair*, *Francis of Assisi* and *The Dark Wave*, which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1956.



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## Abbot Aelred Watkin

Abbot Aelred Watkin was one of the most loved and most respected monks in the Benedictine Order. The two most conspicuous features of his character – a deep spirituality combined with an infectious love of life – are encapsulated in one of William Blake's quotations from his favourite quotations from the *Illustrated London News*: "Everything that lives is holy; life delights in life."

He was born Christopher Ingram Watkin in 1918, the son of a Roman Catholic philosopher and historian, E.I. Watkin, their common middle name perpetuating descent from Herbert Ingram, the founder of the *Illustrated London News*. His mother, Helen Shepherd, was the daughter of Maria Pasqua, who had been a penniless Italian model until she was adopted by a member of the Baring family, the wealthy Comtesse de Noailles.

The young Christopher was educated by the Dominicans at Laxton School in Northamptonshire. He was not, by his own admission, a pious boy, and went through a period of profound unsettlement within the Roman communion. His interests from an early age were literary and antiquarian, but he was aware that his conscience

was continually telling him that a truth, however unwelcome, could never be evaded nor adapted to one's own tastes. It was through the guidance of his confessor – Father Aelwin Tindal – that he came to recognise that earlier doubts had been illusory and that his ultimate destiny was to become a Benedictine monk. On 14 January 1936, never having seen Downside Abbey, and not knowing anyone there, he offered himself as a novice – "a marvellous providence of God to a not too repentant sinner", he subsequently observed.

His life and career thereafter followed an extraordinary course, at every stage marked by the delightful idiosyncrasies of a man whom nature had fashioned to be rather more like a clown than a cleric: short of stature, hulk and clumsy in movement, eyes alight with mischief, and a curiously high-pitched, clipped but emphatic diction which always commanded attention. If not a monk, if not a clown, he had all the capacities, and most of the credentials, of a fine medieval scholar.

He went up to Christ's College, Cambridge, to read History, subsequent to his ordination in

1943. As a second-year undergraduate, he had the intellectual acumen, and also the temerity, to detect serious errors in Cardinal Gasquet's transcription of some of Lord Acton's letters, and, in collaboration with Herbert Butterfield, duly published an *expose* in the *Cambridge Historical Journal*. Before proceeding to his Double First in History, he had already become a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Returning to Downside to teach at the school, notwithstanding offers of greater prestige at Cambridge, he continued to produce outstanding contributions to medieval scholarship – the editing of the three-volume *Great Charters of Glastonbury* (1946-58), and the *Regium Archidiaconatus Norwiche* (1946-49) for the Norwich Records Society – while gaining for his pupils a steady stream of history awards at Oxford and Cambridge.

His methods were again idiosyncratic. On one occasion, in one of Watkin's classes, a school inspector noted with horror a boy wearing a dunce's cap – the penalty, Watkin explained, for asking a question to which he already knew the answer. The



Watkin: idiosyncratic

inspector was mollified when the boy then supplied him with the recondite details of the height and weight of King John. In 1962, having been a housemaster since 1948, Watkin proceeded to the Headmastership of Downside. He loved the dignity, cherished the problems of peculiarly difficult years in which to headmaster, enjoyed the awe of respect of his colleagues whenever he spoke at conferences, and revelled in informal social occasions. He was a disciplinarian of the old school, while usually sympathising with errant boyhood, since so many of its delinquen-

cies reminded him of his own schooldays.

On relinquishing the headship in 1975, he had every hope of becoming Abbot, but it was not to be. He was sent to Beccles in Suffolk as a parish priest. His talents were certainly not wasted, for these were years of great changes within the Catholic liturgy, and none of them congenial to Watkin himself. But he did his duty by his flock, and adapted methods of delegation of responsibility within an active parish council similar to those he had used as a headmaster.

He rose to a wholly improbable civic eminence as well. Having been persuaded to stand as an independent candidate for the Council, he found himself elected Mayor of Beccles in 1979, taking great delight in wearing his mayoral chain over his monkish habit. Disliking long speeches as much as he disapproved of sermons in excess of eight minutes, he conducted council proceedings at a rattling pace. Decisions had never before been taken with such minimal debate. He chose as his mayoral chaplain the local officer of the Salvation Army. In 1989, having suffered a

stroke, he returned to Downside, and was given the titular honour of Abbot of Glastonbury. There were to be no more books from his pen to follow the deeply spiritual writings of his earlier Downside years – *The Heart of the World* (1954), *The Enemies of Love* (1958) and *Resurrection is Now* (1975). He could no longer take long walks (a great hardship, since he loved the countryside), but he continued to play a full part in the monastic life. There were certain indulgences, however, which he refused to forego – a second glass of port, perhaps, and very definitely the joys of tobacco. "I do not fear death," he would tell his friends, "but it is such a break from established habits!"

David Newsome

*Christopher Ingram Watkin, monk: born 23 February 1918; clothed a monk 1937 as Dom Aelred; ordained priest 1943; FRHistS 1946; housemaster, Downside School 1948-62; Headmaster 1962-75; FSA 1950; FRSA 1969; parish priest, Beccles, Suffolk 1975-89; Mayor of Beccles 1979; titular Abbot of Glastonbury 1989-97; died Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Somerset 2 May 1997.*

Jesus the Jew's embarrassing brother  
faith & reason

Pierre-Antoine Bernheim caused a storm in France with his claim that Jesus had a brother whose existence the Church tried to hide. It is the root of anti-Semitism, he argues.

Did Jesus belong to a normal family? Did he have real brothers and sisters? Did they reject or embrace his teachings? Many Christians, Roman Catholics in particular, believe that Jesus had no brothers and sisters. In order to maintain a belief in Mary as ever-virgin, they are obliged to argue that the people referred to in the gospels as Jesus's brothers and sisters were in fact his first cousins. However, most Protestant scholars and increasing numbers of Roman Catholic exegetes are now convinced that, after Jesus's birth, Joseph and Mary had four boys whom they called James, Joseph, Judas and Simon and two or more daughters. The implications of this are significant.

Most churchgoers have also absorbed the view that Jesus's brothers did not believe in him and were not among his followers during his ministry. They often assume that Jesus's family did not share his supposedly radical interpretation of the Jewish Law. Yet a critical look at the evidence raises major questions. The antagonism between Jesus and his family found in the gospels, far from reflecting authentic traditions, may well represent much later conflicts between the communities to which the gospel-writers belonged and the Palestinian churches in which the brothers of Jesus were very influential.

Thus the picture presented in the gospels of a Christian discipleship which requires total dissociation from family ties, such as practised with sometimes disastrous results by modern cults, may be misleading. It is certainly easier to explain the importance of Jesus's family – James in particular – in the early church, if we assume that they were not hostile to Jesus during his lifetime.

In Western Christian tradition Peter is regarded as the most significant apostle, undisputed leader of the primitive church and, by Roman Catholics, as the first Pope. Such a view, enshrined in the principle of apostolic succession, underpins the authority of the Roman Catholic church and its hierarchy. Thus it was under Peter's authority and with his full approval that Paul was in charge of the conversion of pagans. Such a historical reconstruction is hardly confirmed by an impartial reading of the Acts of

the Apostles and Paul's letters. These documents show that the church's foremost leader around 50CE was James, "the brother of the Lord", head of the Jerusalem church. It was James who was the key decision-maker in controversial questions such as whether pagans could be admitted into the Christian community without first converting to Judaism. On several occasions Peter and Paul had to submit to his authority. Sources outside the New Testament tell us that James had a reputation for his strict observance of the Jewish Law, but he seems to have been willing to accept non-Jewish converts into the Christian community. However, he required Christians of pagan origin to follow a number of rules derived from the Jewish Law and probably would have preferred them to become Jews. He was opposed to Paul, who wanted to redefine completely the identity of Israel and the role of the Law. Apart from his following the teachings of Jesus, very little distinguished James from most other Jews of his time. He would have been surprised if someone had told him that he adhered to a new religion.

Modern rediscovery of James's pre-eminence shows that the early church remained deeply rooted in Jewish tradition for some time. This church was without doubt following the example of "Jesus the Jew". The success of Paul's mission among pagans transformed the Christian community from a Jewish sect to a gentile church, for whom James increasingly became a source of embarrassment – a kind of anomaly in the history of the Church as they wanted to reconstruct it. James was swept under the carpet by those who defended the importance of Paul, Peter and Rome; the contribution of Jewish-Christianity was lost.

This emergence of James from obscurity sheds light on the changes which have taken place in the relationship between Judaism and Christianity and how they moved from common roots into antagonism. From our post-holocaust perspective they also reveal how historically absurd Christian anti-Semitism has been.

\* "James, Brother of Jesus" by Pierre-Antoine Bernheim is published in the UK by SCM Press (£14.95)

## Birthdays

TODAY: Mr Milton Babbitt, composer, 81; Mr Win Bischoff, chairman, Schroders, 56; Mrs Barbara Taylor Bradford, author, 64; Mr William Cash, MP, 57; Sir Brian Corby, former chairman, Prudential Corporation, 68; Maj-Gen Peter Davies, Director General, RSPCA, 59; Maj-Gen Edward Farnson, defence consultant, 72; Sir Edward Gardner QC, 85; Sir Basil Kelly, a former Lord Justice of Appeal, Northern Ireland, 77; Miss June Knox-Mawer, radio presenter, 67; Lady Lucinda Lambton (Lady Wansborough), writer, broadcaster and photographer, 54; Mr Richard Lavers, ambassador to Ecuador, 50; Sir John Laws, High Court judge, 52; Miss Maureen Lipman, actress, 51; Sir William Lithgow, industrialist and farmer, 63; Lord Milligan, a Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 63; Lt-Gen Sir Anthony Mullen, former deputy Chief of Defence Staff, 61; Lord Mustill, a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, 66; Sir David Orr, Chancellor, Queen's University of Belfast, 75; Sir Angus Paton, civil engineer, 92; Mr Bruce Raymond, jockey, 54; Mr Michael Shea, author, 59; Lord Smith, consulting surgeon, 83; Sir Denis Thatcher Rt, businessman, 82.

TOMORROW: Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Anson, 68; Sir Edgar Beck, president, John Mowlem, 86; Lady Rachel Billington, writer, 55; Sir Rhodes Boyson, 72; Mr Eric Burton, rock musician, 56; Professor Michael Hamlin, former Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Dundee University, 67; Sir Ernest Harrison, chairman, Racial Electronics, 71; Professor Antony Hewish, radio astronomer, 73; Sir An-

thony Hollis, High Court judge, 70; Sir Robert Hunt, former chairman, Dowry, 79; Sir Gordon Langley, High Court judge, 54; Brigadier Joan Moriarty, former matron-in-chief, Army Nursing Service, 76; Mr John Parrott, snooker player, 33; Mr Jeremy Paxman, television presenter and reporter, 47; Sir Ian Percival QC, former Solicitor-General, 76; Mr Ian Redpath, cricketer, 56; Miss Natasha Richardson, actress, 34; Mr Mort Sahl, comedian, 70; Mr Mike Stenn, rugby player, 46; Miss Judith Weir, composer, 43; The Hon C.M. Woodhouse, historian, 80.

## Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Sir Thomas Johnstone Lipton, millionaire grocer and sportsman, 1850; Fred Astaire (Frederick Austerlitz), dancer and actor, 1899. Deaths: George Vancouver, navigator, 1798; John Cameron Anderson Bingham Morton ("Beachcomber"), humorist, 1979. Today is the Feast Day of St Alphonsus, St Antoninus of Florence, St Calepodius, St Cataldus or Cathal, St Conleth or Conlaed, St Epimarchus, St Gordian, St John of Avila and St Solange. TOMORROW: Births: Paul Nash, painter, 1889; Dame Margaret Rutherford, actress, 1892. Deaths: William Pitt, first Earl of Chatham, statesman, 1778; Spencer Perceval, prime minister, assassinated in the House of Commons 1812; Harold Adrian Russell "Kim" Philby, spy, 1988. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St Anstrid, St Asaph, St Congall, St Francis of Girolamo, St Gengulf or Gengoul, St Ignatius of Laconi, St Mayeul or Majolus, St Mamertus, St Richard Reynolds, St Tudy or Tudoc of Britany and St Walter of L'Estep.

## ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

TODAY: The Princess Royal, Patron, Gloucestershire and North Avon Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs, attends the 84th anniversary of the Young Farmers' Clubs Show at the Equestre Centre, Harbury College, near Gloucester. TOMORROW: The Queen Mother attends the Combined Cavalry Old Comrades' Association Parade and Service in Hyde Park, London W2.

## Changing of the Guard

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard, Horse Guards, 11am. Tomorrow the Scots Guards mount the Queen's Guard, Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard, Horse Guards, 11am. Tomorrow the Scots Guards mount the Queen's Guard, Buckingham Palace, 11.30am.

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## the saturday story

Taking in the sights and sounds of Glyndebourne: it is difficult, but not impossible, to be truly posh while spending large sums of money

Photograph: Tom Pileston

How does one become posh these days? Live in Essex, talk common, wear Oxfam, listen to the Spice Girls, avoid Radio 4... you know the kind of thing. In place of John's 'classless society' comes a time and place where less really is more.

By Richard D North



## On being a toff in Tony's Britain

Britain has its first solidly middle-class prime minister since Clement Attlee – which proves that the People's Party only needs to offer the world the soothing mores of the professional type to secure a landslide. But it is truer than ever that many people still desperately try to appear working class, though this is hardly ever true of people who have known how boring that state really is and can do anything about it. Perversely, we find the PM insisting on first-name terms in the Cabinet – a slip which will encourage people to descend into personalities rather than remember the dignity of their office. The First Lady – already a woman earning more than many small countries – wears leisure outfits which would not be out of place in the departure lounge at Gatwick.

It is time to reassure ourselves that stylishness – the essence of poshness – never dies. This proposition is not, by the way, demonstrated by the news of the royal website being visited by 12.5 million people in the past few months: the royal family has never had it. It was, according to Professor Alan Ross of Birmingham University in 1954, "essentially non-U" to describe things as posh, though the habit was "gaining ground amongst schoolboys of all classes". His paper was reprinted in *Noblesse Oblige*, the class warfare manual Nancy Mitford edited in 1956, a

time when everyone spoke obsessively about the classes because they recognised that society was soon to cease being divided into them.

The intervening years have seen class die, in the sense that neither advantage nor disadvantage is conferred just by people's background. To be fashionable might be all right among the very young, but its charm palls. Trendiness was born tawdry. Few can afford to be grand, in the sense that applies to some of the very rich or aristocratic, who can insulate themselves from society. Indeed, to be posh, an activity's satisfactions need to be lasting or deep, but it will be exercised by people too well mannered to want to cause disquiet to people too poor or lazy (or, more sadly, too stupid) to join in. It follows that it is difficult (though not impossible) to be posh while spending large sums of money. So the opera can be posh, but the ballet is more so.

No one who has anything to sell can make it posh, yet only a decade or two can transform a Rolls-Royce from riddle vulgarly to desirability. There is nothing more posh than an English teenage girl wearing Oxfam and nothing posh at all about "It" girls who brag about their shopping. It is posh to wear good clothes which do not bear the mark of their maker on the outside.

Breeding used to matter. Not now. We all accept that the British are hopelessly mongrel, especially because our

people have always married for love (very posh). The serious Catch 22 is that we have a horror of snobs. It is a mark of social failure to admit to feeling anything like social superiority. Aristocrats and harrow boys have always had an affinity, a relationship which has especially flourished since the Sixties, when so many of both classes became photographers (*pace* Lichfield and Bailey). Beware feeling superior about an address – Essex is posh because it is prettier than expected and because of the courage it takes to live there.

The lower middle classes, when they could still be identified, were pitted by everyone else in society for their snobbery. Their confidence has not been much improved during the decades in which they have provided our prime ministers. Being located in the muddy middle, they have found mobility hard to embrace, unlike the volatile upper and lower classes.

It is a rule of thumb that it is posh to be improvident, whatever young politicians are trying to achieve in that direction. But to plant even a hedge is posh (because it is a gift to the ungrateful future). To be interested in pensions is disastrously unposh. It snacks of self-concern, whose most deplorable manifestation is most sorts of counselling. Smoking and any self-destructive activity stands a chance of being posh, as does anything to do with horses, according to Charles Jennings in his *People Like Us – A Season Among the Upper Classes*, just published.

It may be a little soon for the Blair-endorsed Ford Galaxy "people mover" to dominate the Badminton horse trials this weekend: expect, however, a flurry of the vulgar Land-Rover Discovery among the far grander Defenders and Range Rovers of that marque. Though dangerous, jogging remains unposh, partly by being done in the kind

of clothes Tony's Cherie affects. It is posh for a woman to use her husband's name, because it demonstrates self-abandonment. It remains a sound rule for spouses to use each other's surnames only, whatever the trend in Downing Street.

Poshness depends on quality, and thus on obduracy. It attaches to clubs whose entry fee is talent or style, but never merely money. It is about being individualist, but not bohemian. In a classless society, and one whose official religion has become the suppression of elitism, anyone trying to maintain ordinary – that is to say, high – standards is dissident and stands a fair chance of being posh.

There isn't much that the BBC does which is exceptional, but Radio 1 has become intermittently posh. Its *Essential Selection* on Friday evening is accepted as defining what thoughtful and savvy clubbers want to hear. It sets their agenda, not in the usual modern way of seeking the lowest common denominator, but by being satisfyingly the best. The Barbican is posh in the same way that Essex is.

Sheer exuberance ensures the Spice Girls a degree of poshness, as it does Alan Clark (whose wealth and celebrity risk damaging this claim). Besides Mr Clark, other fading beauties achieve poshness in the degree to which they have regained dignity having once thrown it away. Marianne Faithfull is a good example; Jane Birkin and Charlotte Rampling run her close. Helen Mirren is posh because although she's an actress, she often speaks excellent sense. All speak posh, which helps.

Any sensible and posh person is dismayed – genuinely disquieted – by the experience of waking up to Radio 4 in the morning. It is odd enough that government ministers have lives so empty

that they want to start work at 7 or 8am. The offence of the *Today* programme is to contrive a blend of indigestibility and pabulum which is offensive to posh people, who are busy, so they do not want slummary. The old World Service is a better model: its quality is derived from its being equally satisfactory in ambassadorial residences and mud huts. The *World Tonight* comes closest.

The *Week*, a weekly digest of the media, is posh partly because it avoids adjectives and is very late with the news. If a thing's worth knowing, it can be expected to remain so for seven days. Matthew Parris is posh because he recognises that an aphorism is to a joke what unprotected sex is to hall-room dancing.

It is difficult to have anything to do with television and be posh, though Jon Snow's *Channel 4 News* comes nearest. The women on *Newsnight* nearly make it posh, but Jeremy Paxman's melodramatics have lowered the venue's tone beyond rescue. It is doubtful that anyone who has anything remotely interesting to do will be watching television, unless – as in the case of *Channel 4 News* – it amounts to a radio programme and does not interfere with preparing supper. Posh food is on the whole prepared at home, though it is posh to be so busy that one has to let someone else do it. The same principle more tenuously applies to bringing up or educating children but not to gardening, which one should do oneself.

Tesco is posher than Sainsbury because they recognise that it is retailers, not their customers, who should be aspirational. Posh eating out is difficult, though greasy spoons are possible, and the Market Café in Spitalfields remains a style leader. Despite its prices, The Connaught is posh, for either eating or sleeping.

By the way, it is virtually impossible

that any meal eaten at home will be dinner, and safest to use the word only when evening clothes are involved. Nancy Mitford thought only pets and children could be thought of as eating dinner, in the sense of its being their "main meal", in the middle of the day. Whatever we call it, and it doesn't much matter, it is quite posh to be up so early that one's main meal is eaten early.

A prime rule of poshness used to be a pride in the Anglo-Saxon simplicities of life and speech. This led to a valuable loathing of anything French. It also led to the absurdity that the anglicised Italian word for a water closet – "lavatory" – was preferred to "toilet". This is obviously ridiculous, but anyone so perfectly spiritual that they can use the word "toilet" without shame is probably already in heaven.

Several years of Labour government may change this. It is obviously right (though for years it was thought wrong) to believe that Chanel sell perfume, not scent. Perfume is something the French make. Scent is something a respectable British fox has and hounds follow (at least for now). There are very few rules now about speech, except that everyone over 16 ought to speak as they want. Up until then, it is anomalous and acceptable that everyone is driven to sound as common as possible.

On the whole, less is more. It is posh to be laconic. Short books are better than long ones, short films better than epics. Drawings are better than paintings (hence, the poshest galleries of all are the drawing rooms of the British Museum). Now that everyone has been everywhere and seen every natural wonder, staying at home to do a water-colour of one's window box is posh.

Warning: public displays of affection are seldom posh, and should be indulged in only when absolutely necessary for strictly private reasons.



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Every year at The Samaritans we receive over a million totally silent phone calls. For whatever reason, the callers can't begin to tell us what's troubling them. Equally, callers who do start may be unable to go on – many hang up halfway through a conversation, or simply go quiet. With all of these callers, though, we have one golden rule: we never stop listening. We won't be the ones to hang up or say goodbye. Our number's in the phone book, or you can call our new national number on 0345 90 90 90. Every call is confidential. Even if you can't talk, we'll listen.

## jo brand's week

Henley-on-Thames has never really attracted me as a venue for a day out, saddled as it is with that Hooray Henry image. So it was not a big surprise to discover that the rowing club there was not open to women, and had not been so for the last 200 years. However, this has all changed and the array of colonel types on the selection committee have done an about-turn and decided to admit women. In these days of the UK Men's Movement and new lads, it is so refreshing to see that a bunch of dyed-in-the-wool old misogynists has finally seen the light. If only! What actually happened was that open membership was a key condition of a sizeable potential grant from the lottery. If only we women had known this years ago, we needn't have fought for equal rights – all we had to do was just give them a cheque. Money can't buy love, but it sure can get a load of duffers to throw open the doors of male preserves.

The indignity of the aging process in a country that worships youth is played out in so many different arenas, sport perhaps being one of the cruellest. Last week, Peter

Shilton, the ex-England goalkeeper who has been playing at Orient, was given his cards because he cannot kick the ball far enough. Well, pardon me for my girlicious ignorance, but I always thought it was more important to stop the ball going in that net thing. Poor old Shilton – his humiliation is there for all to see and he will not be the last to be shoved out.

Last weekend, I was in Norway for a comedy festival in Stavanger, a coastal town heavily involved in the oil business, thus attracting a selection of people from all over the world. Norwegians speak very good English and had very little trouble understanding what I was saying. In fact, so enthusiastic did they seem to be for my appearance that when I trundled on stage, they gave my boots a separate round of applause. So will this arrangement be reciprocated with a group of Norwegian comics coming to England to perform their acts in their native tongue? What do you think?

I began my 30-date tour in Portsmouth this week. First

nights are always a little bit scary, what with bits of new material as yet fairly untested, a certain rustiness as far as big venues are concerned and a certain unpredictability about the audience. It came as a shock on Tuesday night when I was chatting away to the audience and asking them what was good about Portsmouth, that someone shouted out "It's nigger free." Having informed the heckler that he was obviously at the wrong show, I carried on. A message to anyone holding these sorts of opinions who has tickets to any of my shows – don't come.

There seems to be a crime wave at the moment engulfing the group known as "the super rich". Numerous lords, ladies, heiresses and millionaire types

have been robbed of their jewellery and the like. Much as I abhor violence, I have to say I would much rather criminals robbed the super-rich, who can afford it, rather than ordinary people, who cannot. Flaunting one's wealth in a country in which, during the reign of the Tories, the number of people below the poverty line went from three million to 13 million can only make poor people angry. The haves cannot blame the have-nots for coveting their oxen.

Refreshing to see over-privileged posh sporty blokes getting their comeuppance. This week, an elite Cambridge University drinking club got a severe wrist-slap after a débacle at a party in a hotel during which male students vomited (aren't they just so

predictable when they're had a drink?), wrecked furniture and sexually harassed waitresses. This club (surprise, surprise) excludes women and the event, it would seem, reflects the behaviour of sporting students the country over. It seems a shame that in many cases, physical prowess inevitably means yobbiness and out-of-control behaviour. Let's do our best to prevent these boys becoming part of the ruling elite; you can be sure that among the vomit and broken tables were a couple of potential Tory MPs.

Following the sentencing this week of the "boys who raped the Austrian tourist", it's perhaps time to reassess our attitude towards adolescents who carry out this sort of appalling crime. To all intents and purposes, that attack was made a group of men, meaning by the fact that kids that age will do almost anything for the peer group demands for fear of looking foolish. Having had one or two niggles myself with groups of boys, I think that it is time we realised they are a dangerous group who are getting physically stronger and much less easier to control as each year passes.



هكذا من الامم



## Call me Cookie

Everyone in the new Cabinet will be on first-name terms. Which means, of course, that they will all get nicknames...

## david aaronovitch



It has been reported this week that the Foreign Secretary, Mr Robin Cook (henceforth to be known only as Robin), is to circulate those who lie abroad for their country with a special video, introducing himself and his policies. Previously they only received a short note reading something like "Dear colleague. My name's Malcolm. I'm another Tory. I want Britain to be at the heart of Europe. Cheers."

But this new endeavour is not to be some Majorish lecture delivered to the camera. The Cook Report (as it is not called) is apparently to be filmed under the supervision of movie mogul, David Putnam. There will be thrills, tears and emotion. One rumour even suggests that Mel Gibson – fresh from his triumph over the Scottish accent in *Braveheart* – will play the part of the MP for Livingston.

I am in favour of this bold use of technology. Indeed I believe that the principle should be extended. Enterprising college leavers, for example, should employ media students to create video CVs for them, using every visual artifice to enhance their images in the minds of potential employers. Filmed revising for their exams, engaging their fellows in witty conversation, or undertaking voluntary work among the lepers of the East Indies (as recreated in a photographer's studio in Chiswick), jobseekers could expect to make a far better impression than mere interview might afford.

Would it not also have cut out a lot of silly talk and exhausting dancing had one been able to put putative inamorati in the picture (so to speak), with a soft-focus tape advertising one's gentleness, sensuality and unexpected good looks?

But Robin's move is only one of several exciting initiatives. The other main one is the decision that everyone in the Cabinet will call each other by their first names. Which means, of course, that they will all get nicknames. Almost any group of sympathetic British people – of whatever age and class – when thrown together will begin to rechristen each other. Go and watch a park football match, and you will hear the players cursing each other using monikers that

parents never invented. "Del! Del!" "On me head, Gail!" "Ferret! Man on!" So we can expect Jacko for the new Home Secretary, Robbo for the defence supremo, Dohbo (which has the advantage of conveying a certain onomatopoeic truth) for the guardian of the nation's health.

There will be names ending in -za, as in Prezza, and -is, as in Cookie and Smithie. Derry Irvine will be Del. Blunkers will run education, Hattie and Mags will swap dormitory stories with Shorty. I just hope that they will call the Chief Secretary to the Treasury "Darling".

Some will object. Last year, a book edited by the reactionary gourmand Digby Anderson (yet another right-wing pundit who woke up last Friday to find his purchase on public attention reduced to nearly nothing) contained fulminations by several academics against such abominations as the wearing of "gym clothes" in bank queues and the sexual aggressiveness suggested by the use of leggings.

One remarked that the fashion for first-name terms had eroded the respect necessary for relationships such as that between bank manager and client and (one imagines) between Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Agriculture (Jacko, or Jackie?).

But this – as is usual with the authoritarian right – confuses the respect due to the position with that earned by the man. No one in the Labour Party is likely to use the names "Tony" or "Gordon" lightly, or to invest them with less significance than "Prime Minister" or "Chancellor".

I would go further. Tony has now become a name of talismanic power, not just a christian name. Like Oscar or Caesar, it may well be destined to transcend its nameliness and become a noun – in this case referring to the leader of the Labour Party. We can look forward to 2010, when Peter Mandelson battles it out with Alan Sugar's son and Richard Branson's daughter to become Labour's new Tony.

I have little doubt that when he does so, every single member of the Labour Party will receive a CD-Rom – directed by Quentin Tarantino.

# The dream ticket Hague won't change his mind on

by Kathy Marks and Tony Heath

There is an air of serenity about William Hague that seems as fixed as his boyish smile. It may owe much to his habit of descending into a trance-like state for 20 minutes every day in pursuit of his hobby of transcendental meditation. Lately, one might suspect a more prosaic reason – his beautiful and well-connected fiancée, Ffion Jenkins.

It is a union that might, as the cliché goes, have been made in heaven. After electrifying the Conservative conference at the age of 16, Hague rises effortlessly through the party to become Secretary of State for Wales at 34. As the general election approaches and a Tory defeat is on the cards, he is the bookies' favourite to be the next party leader. He lacks only one vital attribute – a wife at his side.

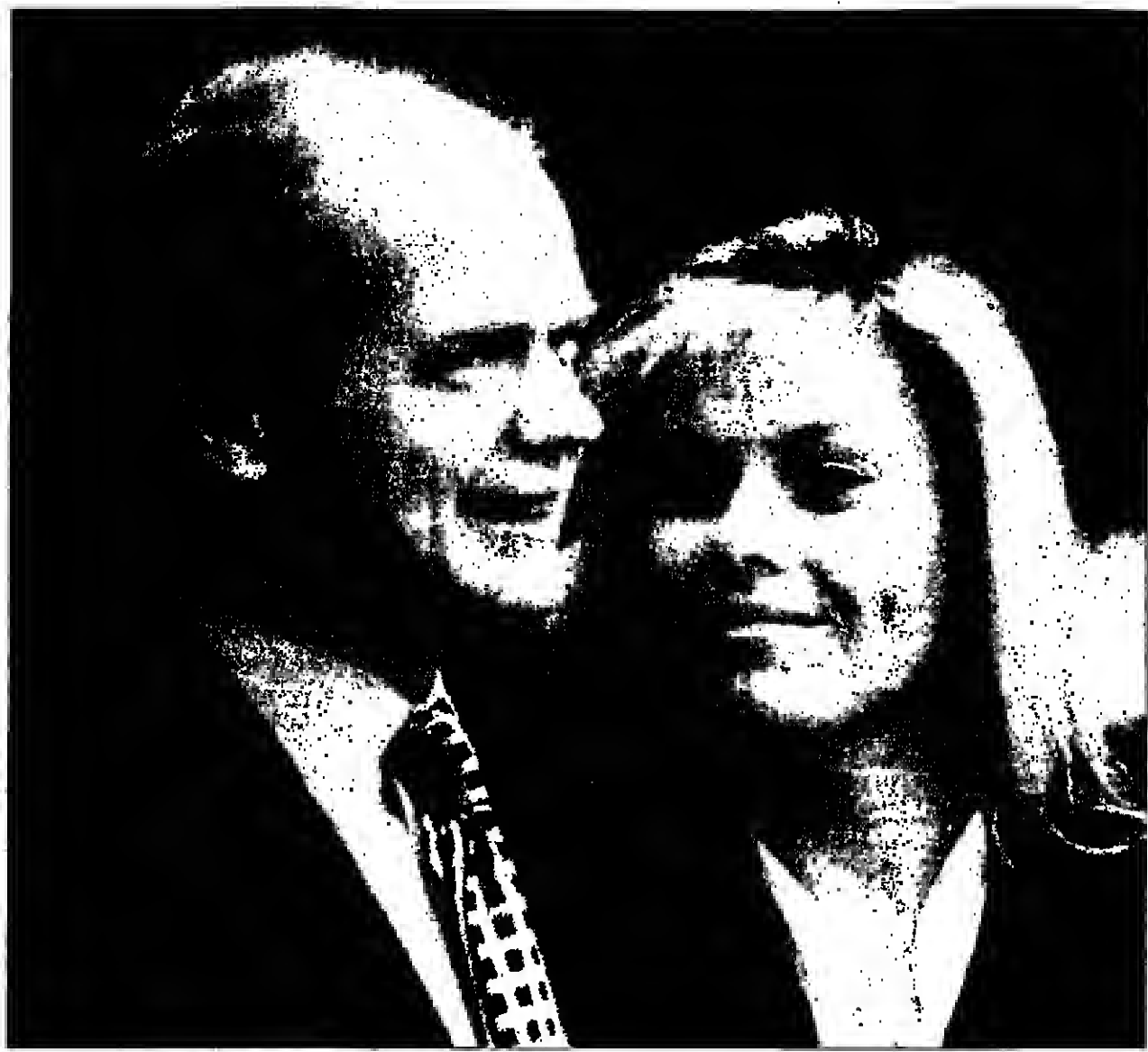
Enter, just two months before polling day, Miss Jenkins. The stunned faces of friends who thought the boy Hague would never get hitched are swiftly rearranged into congratulatory smiles. It turns out that the couple have been dating secretly for four months. They have just got engaged, so it is time to go public.

The cynics are cruel. William and Ffion are clearly smitten with one another, and the timing is just a happy coincidence. All those snide comments about Hague being a confirmed bachelor – that was just sour grapes by people on whom Lady Luck has not smiled so brightly. After all, he has had plenty of girlfriends in the past, including a House of Commons secretary and a glamorous public relations executive.

And yet, if he were to have constructed an Identikit picture of his ideal partner, of the woman best suited to helping him on the next staging post of his political career, she would have looked remarkably like Ffion Jenkins. Now that battle for the Tory leadership has been joined in earnest, his impending nuptials – sometime next year, say friends – are all the more important for his image.

Hague's promotion to the Cabinet led to him meeting Miss Jenkins, a 28-year-old senior civil servant in the Welsh Office. She was until recently his assistant private secretary. Love blossomed, so the story goes, after Hague enlisted her help to teach him the words of *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* (Land of My Fathers). He had been anxious not to repeat the mistake of his predecessor, John Redwood, who was caught merely mouthing the Welsh national anthem at an official function.

It was during these singing lessons that a mutual professional admiration turned personal. According to one story, the tuition took place on a windy hillside in north Wales. Another tale has it that Hague was initiated in a churchyard in Abergele.



It is sometimes said that couples grow to resemble one another, like pets and their owners. William and Ffion seem to have reached that apotheosis already

While the relationship was still secret, he almost gave the game away on one occasion when, on leaving a St David's Day party early, he announced to Welsh Office officials that he was off to dinner with "Jolly Jenkins". Once it was public, Hague said that they had been so intent on discretion that they had not dared risk shopping together for an engagement ring.

Love is not always a fairy tale, and can exact casualties along the way. Miss Jenkins was obliged to break the news of the whirlwind romance to her former boyfriend, Darran Phillips, a financial adviser with a convertible Mercedes.

It is sometimes said that couples grow to resemble one another, in the same way as pets and their owners. William and Ffion seem to have reached that apotheosis of togetherness already. When the first photographs of them were published, there they were with their wavy blonde hair – his fetching receding, of course, hers luxuriously abundant – and their flawless features, their similar shy smiles.

Alan Duncan MP, a close friend of Hague's, described Miss Jenkins as an "absolute cracker". She is also regarded as a remarkably intelligent. Equally significantly, perhaps, she has provided her Yorkshire-born fiancé with an entrée to Welsh high society – the "crachach", as it is quaintly known.

The term, which translates as "petty gentry", connotes upstarts and snobs, refers to the network of influential Welsh-speaking families who run Wales's public bodies, quangos and institutions. In less polite circles, they are known as the Taffia. They make up the elite of Welsh public life – a strata of society described by Kim Howells MP as "probably the most effective back-scratching organisation outside of Sicily".

They include Geraint Talfan Davies, Controller of BBC Wales and a governor of the Welsh College of Music and Drama. There is Wynford Evans, chairman of the Bank of Wales and former chairman of South Wales Electricity, not forgetting, of course, Emyr Jenkins, father of the future Mrs Hague, who is chief executive of the Arts Council of Wales, former director of the National Eisteddfod and an elder of the Cwys Presbyteria Church of Wales.

Miss Jenkins studied English at Jesus College; Hague gained a first in politics, philosophy and economics from Magdalen. She went on to a degree in Welsh at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth; he to a high-flying job with McKinsey, the management consultants.

Ffion is described by friends as a quiet, studious woman who came out of her shell at university. Fellow members of the Welsh Society at Oxford recall her being taken to hospital after an evening of high spirits led to her being accidentally stabbed in the leg by a ceremonial sword.

While Miss Jenkins pursued a career in the civil service, Hague became an MP at 27, going on to become parliamentary private secretary to Norman Lamont and then pensions minister.

His betrothal represented the high point of his acceptance by Welsh society. When he was appointed, he knew how difficult it was for Welsh secretaries, from England to be taken seriously in the principality. Previous incumbents had been lampooned as English overlords who spent as little time as possible across the Severn. The Labour MP John Morris, a former Welsh secretary himself, poured scorn on the choice of Hague to fill in for Redwood after the latter resigned to fight John Major for the leadership. "Not since Caligula made his house a senator has such a ridiculous appointment been made," said Morris.

But Hague was determined to clasp Wales to his bosom. He regularly journeyed between Westminster, his Yorkshire constituency and his new fiefdom – a 1,000-mile circuit that became known as The Hague Triangle.

He visited hospitals and factories, climbed Mount Snowdon and strode the Pembrokeshire coastal path, staying in modest bed and breakfasts. He signed a deal with a South Korean electronics company that created thousands of new jobs. He even supported the Welsh rugby team against England.

With the Conservative defeat in the election, events have moved on and, for Hague, the stakes may be higher. If he persuades fellow Tory MPs to skip a generation and elect a youthful leader to lead them back from the wilderness, Wales will cease to figure so large in his life. If he fails in his ambitions, he is likely to secure a front-rank post in the Shadow Cabinet, which could be a different portfolio.

Miss Jenkins was with Hague at Michael Howard's Belgraveia flat earlier this week when the two men hatched a deal over champagne to run for the leadership together. By the next morning, Hague had changed his mind. But while he may have ditched the political dream ticket, the fiancée of his dreams seems likely to remain by his side.

## William the Conqueror?

"WE NEED A NEW BRAND OF LEADERSHIP TO TRANSFORM A DEFEATED, DIVIDED PARTY INTO A VICTORIOUS CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT."

THE SPECTATOR

A useful pair of sunglasses for those dazzled by the glare of a new political dawn.

## French lessons in school runs

If the Deputy Prime Minister really wants to tackle the problem of gridlock, he could usefully start by talking to his boss. The most heart-warming images of the week were the Blair family moving house.

We have children of similar ages to the Blair-ettes, and are about to undergo the same trauma, even if our destination is not as exalted as theirs. But everyone has been through it. Even if you hire those incredibly efficient and muscular people who pack everything in cardboard cartons, you still can't fit it all in. Someone's most precious possession goes missing; and you can never understand what all that stuff the kids are carrying actually is.

No wonder that Mrs B might have lost the plot for a moment and forgotten that she is on show every minute of the day; the now famous photograph is etched on the national memory and has endeared her to us. The nation breathed a sigh of relief – this is no Hillary Clinton – steeled-eyed and perfectly turned out on all occasions. She's just like us, really.

But the Blair family, like every other family, face a profound decision about school: to drive or not to drive? In their case, I suspect the decision is made for them. But for security people, and quite rightly. But for most of us it's less clear-cut. We can't keep our children at home. Nor can we, unless Mr Blunkert turns out to be Merlin the Magician in disguise, expect that all our children will be able to go to a neighbourhood school in walking distance of our front doors. This is especially true in rural areas, and in any event, as astute in rural areas, once every seven years, the likelihood is that even if we do



Trevor Phillips  
The Blairs, like every other family, face an agonising decision about school: to drive or not to drive?

have an acceptable local school that will take our children, they won't be there for their whole school careers.

Yet we know that school traffic has doubled in the past 20 years. It now adds between 10 and 20 per cent to the peak-time volume of traffic in most cities; and it also affects the countryside too, where buses are scarce. And the numbers are set to rise. But the traffic experts say that a 7 per cent reduction in traffic volumes could make all the difference.

In fact, my colleagues at London Weekend Television recently conducted a simple but telling experiment. They filmed a suburban roundabout at 8am in two successive weeks. The first week it was jammed solid. The second week, it was almost empty, and the traffic sped through. The second week was, of course, half-term. The point is that it may only take a small change to transform the situation – a rattlesnake with its final inch removed is a completely new proposition. The genie will not go back in the bottle, however; with two out of three families now owning cars, the days of the long walk to school or the school bus are over.

As ever, the Americans are ahead of us on this. Especially in California, where families have embraced car-pooling with a vengeance. There are companies set up to organise routes. You can even find partners on the Internet; pages urge you to save money, beat the stress and cut down on pollution. You also get to use special lanes. But there's a limit – trying to co-ordinate with your own family is hard enough, without adding anyone

else's early-morning confusion to the mix.

The French, typically, disdain this sort of shambles and have adopted a nationally directed solution. In the UK, because of the historic control of schools by local authorities, every school in each area usually has the same holidays. There, they stagger holidays by designating every school in the country *un, deux or trois*. *Les uns* begin their Easter holidays, for example, two weeks after *les deux*, and *les trois* start two weeks after that.

This means that for a large part of the year only a third or two-thirds of the cars that disrupt the morning and afternoon traffic need to be on the roads. It may not



Door to gate service: car pooling would make life easier

be as convenient for teachers, but it seems to work. There could be an additional boon. Spreading the holiday weeks across the year might reduce the demand for foreign vacations in specific weeks, and force travel companies to bang down their preposterous prices. This is the sort of *dirigiste*, no-nonsense, non-ideological answer that ought to appeal to No 10 – New Labour, New Timetable.

While Mr Prescott is talking to his boss about traffic, he might also have another word about the new government's

make-up. Any Prime Minister with a landslide majority and the chutzpah to give Tony Banks a job is possibly beyond criticism. But I hope that the colour in this administration won't be restricted to the bright hues of its women members' skirts.

Pleased as I am to see the gentle ascent of Mr Paul Boateng to a junior minister's Mondeco, it's disappointing that the assiduous and clever Leicester East MP Keith Vaz could not also find a place in government, despite having been the shadow minister for urban affairs. His crusade on behalf of the victims of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International débacle was admirable, and for those of us interested in the inner cities, he was beginning to develop something that looked like an imaginative approach to regeneration. He would have been an asset to Mr Prescott's team.

I think that my colleague Donald Macintyre and I can claim to have played a part in the most surprising ministerial appointment of all – that of Tony Banks. Macintyre and I jointly host

a Sunday lunchtime political talk show, on which Banks is a regular performer. Week after week we have tried to tempt the MP for West Ham to criticise the Blairite ascendancy in his party. Week after week he has refused the bait. Though towards the end the strain was showing – we had to spray Banks with cold water after one particularly provocative interview with Jack Straw – his loyalty never wavered. He now has his reward. I'm sure that he would like to know that I'm sure that he would like to know that I will be free on Cup Final Day.



## business &amp; city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098  
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNERBZW turmoil  
claims another  
senior scalpTom Stevenson  
Financial Editor

The turmoil at BZW since its highly paid chief executive, Bill Harrison, swept into the embattled investment bank last year has claimed another senior scalp. According to an internal memo, the future of Michael Hughes, head of economics and strategy, is currently "under discussion" after the dismemberment of his department and an apparent coup to remove him.

Mr Hughes said yesterday he was discussing a new role within the group, but well-placed insiders cast doubt on his future after a row over how economics and strategy should fit into the bank's new pan-European structure. It is understood that a group of his colleagues who had been offered jobs at rival Salomon Brothers said they would only stay at BZW on condition that Mr Hughes went.

Best known for the highly regarded BZW Equity-Gilt study he produces every year, Mr Hughes has been with the company for more than 20 years, since long before De Zoete & Bevan was acquired by Barclays 10 years ago.

His removal comes at a time of crisis for the company after a sharp fall in profits last year against a backdrop of rising returns from other investment banks. Since the New Year, 17

analysts have left BZW's equities operation although the firm claims it has replaced the leavers with 25 new recruits. More is reported to be at risk bottom amid widespread speculation that the firm's parent, Barclays, is seeking offers for the business.

At the heart of BZW's problems lies its move to Canary Wharf in London's Docklands from its present headquarters in the City. In a bid to maintain employees' loyalty during the staggered transfer, which has already seen some departments head east, a generous new system of sabbaticals is understood to have been introduced.

Part of the blame for the high staff turnover in recent months has been a shift to a much more uncompromising performance culture. According to a spokesman: "There was a change of policy on bonuses this year. People who performed well got very good packages indeed. Others did not. There was a big differential this year."

Until recently Mr Hughes headed a separate economics and strategy function that was viewed with distrust by some as a distinct fiefdom alongside BZW's equities and bond market operations. The changes, which have left Mr Hughes in search of a role, mean the company's economists and strategists are now directly an-

swerable to its global heads of equities and markets.

Mr Hughes is understood to be furious at the way in which his replacement as head of economics by Robert Barrie, another BZW economist, was announced on Thursday before discussions over his future had been completed. A spokesman denied the accusation made by more than one insider that BZW's equities operation had become a "shambles".

Bill Harrison, who was parachuted in from Flemings last year on a package worth £6m over five years, faces an uphill struggle to justify BZW's place within Barclays. At the time of Barclays' full year results announcement in February, its chief executive, Martin Taylor, said BZW's 8 per cent return on capital would not be tolerated for long. There is increasing pressure from investors for Barclays to get out of investment banking altogether to concentrate on its less cyclical and highly profitable retail operations.

Analysts believe BZW will have to spend heavily to become a competitive force on the world stage. During 1996 its cost base rose by £160m, three quarters of which was directly attributed to staff costs. The firm said \$45m was spent on "upgrading" - hiring and firing staff - during the period.



'Under discussion': After the dismemberment of his department the future of Michael Hughes, head of economics and strategy, is in doubt, according to an internal BZW memo

Siebe bid may  
spark battle  
for APV

Magnus Grimond

Stock market dealers were yesterday anticipating a possible bid tussle for APV after the rival Siebe engineering group launched an agreed £331m offer which would create the world's leading supplier of process control systems for the food, drink and pharmaceutical industries.

APV's shares, which were 66p before it first revealed an approach at the end of April, soared 17p to 106.5p yesterday, just above the Siebe bid terms. Siebe is offering 0.10955 of its own shares for every one in APV, valuing the latter at just above 106p after the Siebe price rose 11.5p to 970p yesterday. Siebe is shaving around £3.5m off its bid costs by underwriting 46 per cent of 97.5p cash alternative from its own resources.

APV announced it had received a second "indication of interest" just two days after Siebe's approach keeping an open mind as to whether a rival would make a counter offer. GEA, a German food processing machinery company which announces its results on Monday, refused to rule itself out of the running, although European competition concerns may prove a constraint. Speculation was also rife yesterday about the intentions of FMC, a big US food conglomerate.

Paul Compton of brokers Merrill Lynch suggested there was still a slim chance of a rival offer. "It might not be all over, but I think it probably is," he said.

There was a general welcome from analysts for the Siebe deal, which comes 11 years after it mounted an earlier takeover attempt on APV. Describing it as a "clap on acquisition" which would be integrated with the Foxboro control systems business, Allen Yurko, Siebe's chief executive, said it offered "clear, no nonsense, up-front synergy benefits" which will enhance earnings and enhance shareholder value "right out of the blocks". He said APV's original plan to shed 500 jobs might possibly be increased to as

many as 1,000, with most of the losses coming outside the UK and administrative functions. APV's chief executive, Neil French, is being kept on for at least the transition period, but he could be in line for a pay-off of around £600,000 if he goes.

APV has been struggling for years and Siebe is now aiming to raise last year's 3.5 per cent margins to 10 per cent over the next two to three years, implying around £50m of cost savings are in prospect. But Mr Yurko said the main benefits would come from cross



Barrie Stephens: Siebe chairman unlocks growth

selling Siebe's Intelligent Automation process control system, which is now close to overtaking Honeywell as the market leader in this sector, through APV's 1,000 strong sales force operating in 40 countries. Foxboro already has around 1,000 sales staff.

APV will give the group a commanding 11 to 12 per cent share of the market for control systems in the food, drink and pharmaceutical industries, well ahead of 9 per cent share held by Tetra-Laval of Sweden. The purchase will also fill in another piece of Siebe's product portfolio, which already commands number two or number three slots in markets ranging from oil, gas and chemicals, through power and water utilities to pulp and paper.

## Amstrad wins £57m damages against US supplier

Michael Harrison

Amstrad, the electronics company founded by Alan Sugar, was yesterday awarded damages in the High Court of £57.5m against the world's biggest manufacturer of computer disk drives.

The award against Seagate Technology of California could ultimately reach nearly £100m once interest is included - equal to nearly a third of Amstrad's turnover and 40 per cent of its market capitalisation.

The court accepted Amstrad's claim that faulty disk drives supplied by Seagate had wrecked its attempt to enter the business computer market and destroyed its reputation as a serious supplier.

David Gold of lawyers Herbert Smith, who represented Amstrad during the long-running legal action, said the ruling had completely vindicated Mr Sugar, adding: "Not surprisingly, he is a very happy man this afternoon."

An Amstrad spokesman added that the award would go some way towards repaying its shareholders. Amstrad's cash mountain already stands at £132m and could reach nearly £232m depending on the amount of interest added to the award.

However, Seagate immediately announced that it would appeal against the ruling. Its chairman, Al Shugart, said: "We were shocked and appalled at the court's decision."

The High Court ruling is likely to strengthen Amstrad's case in a similar claim it is bringing against Western Digital Corporation, another California-based supplier of disk drives. The action is due to be heard in California later this year.

Amstrad began its case against Seagate in 1992 although the claim dates back to 1989. It was finally heard in the High Court between April and July last year.

The case centred around disk drives supplied by Seagate for the Amstrad 2386 - the machine with which Mr Sugar planned to conquer the business PC market in the way he had with cheap PCs aimed at consumers.

Mr Gold said that the fault lay in the way the disk drives recorded data which could not, subsequently be found. "The disks did not work properly for a long time and no one knew why."

But because the machines were out in the market place the reputation of Amstrad was being destroyed and it never got back into the market.

Seagate employs 87,000 people and has a market value of \$12.5bn. It made an after-tax profit of \$213m on sales of \$8.5bn in the year ended last July.

Amstrad, by contrast, made a £15m loss on turnover of £330m in the year to the end of June, 1996.

KPMG calls for end of  
Lloyd's annual ventureTom Stevenson  
Financial Editor

Far-reaching changes to the capital structure of Lloyd's of London were recommended yesterday in a report by KPMG, the accounting and consultancy firm.

The study, commissioned by an association of the insurance market's corporate investors, recommended abandoning the traditional annual venture system. Abolishing the system, which forces syndicates to raise fresh capital each year to support underwriting, could save £117m a year - a tenth of last year's profits at Lloyd's.

Commenting on the KPMG report, Antony Haynes, chairman of the Lloyd's Corporate Capital Association, said: "The evidence contained within KPMG's independent report clearly speaks for itself. Both traditional names and corporate capital providers are seeing a substantial part of their underwriting returns being eroded by a market practice of the annual venture which is not only costly, but is also increasingly inhib-

ing the international competitiveness of Lloyd's."

KPMG's conclusions focus on the debate about the desirability of new-style corporate investors who have flooded the market since they were admitted in 1994 and now represent 44 per cent

Both names and corporate capital providers see their returns being eroded

of the market's underwriting capacity. That share is expected to rise above half this year as traditional names are squeezed out. According to KPMG, the direct costs of the so-called annual venture represent a significant proportion of a member of Lloyd's likely underwriting return, especially for traditional names. Corporate investors are in favour of mov-

ing to a permanent capital structure at Lloyd's rather than the current annual system.

The annual venture has been preferred by traditional names in the past because it allows individual investors to move funds around Lloyd's, changing syndicates as and when they wished. It has also been claimed that the traditional annual system puts pressure on underwriters to perform.

As well as the direct costs incurred by the annual venture system, the KPMG report pointed to several indirect, opportunity costs which were damaging the competitiveness of the market. Permanent capital, the report said, would make Lloyd's a better match for conventional insurance companies by offering clients multi-year contracts and greater flexibility in meeting the requirements of overseas regulators.

The KPMG report comes shortly before Lloyd's publishes the conclusions of a number of working parties set up to discuss its future. The results of those working parties are expected within the next fortnight.

Stephen Vines  
Hong Kong

Share trading in Hong Kong went into overdrive yesterday despite hopes for a deal between the Cable & Wireless (C&W) controlled Hongkong Telecom and a well-placed Chinese telecommunications partner failing to materialise.

Instead of a Chinese partner emerging for Hongkong Telecom, the Chinese government-controlled Citic Pacific sold its 7.74 per cent stake in the company at a knock-down price to the state-run China Everbright industrial conglomerate.

Volume trading on the Hong

Kong stock market was very heavy, driving the blue chip Hang Seng Index to 14,075 points at one stage. The index finally closed 190.5 points up, at an all-time high of 13,930.8.

The intensity of market rumours caused Hongkong Telecom's shares to be suspended for most of yesterday's trading. Dealings resumed just before the close, but were greeted by a flurry of sell orders which wiped 3 per cent of the company's share price to HK\$14.50.

However, investors took a more favourable view of Citic Pacific, China's biggest overseas investment company. Despite the low sale price of HK\$12.50

a share, a 16 per cent discount on the pre-suspension price, the move was seen as providing Citic Pacific with the funds for investments with better potential. Citic's shares gained 90 cents to HK\$44.4.

Brian Smith, C&W chairman, issued a brief statement saying that the proposed investment "demonstrates continued confidence in Hongkong Telecom and Hong Kong through the 1997 transition and beyond". The statement described Everbright, which is not listed on the local stock exchange, as "a significant enterprise under the leadership of [China's] State Council".

Hongkong Telecom, con-

trolled by C&W with a 59 per cent stake and capitalised at more than £12.3bn, is one of the colony's largest companies. Its share price has been spiralling upwards in anticipation of a deal with China Unicom, China's second telecommunications network operator, owned by several regional governments, Citic Pacific's parent company and the Ministry of Electronics.

The deal was seen as a powerful piece of political insurance for the colony's former monopoly telephone company, which is vulnerable because of its British ownership. On Thursday Dick Brown, C&W's new chief executive,

made his maiden appearance in the colony for the annual results which fuelled speculation that he was in town to conclude a deal with China Unicom.

Some analysts believe a deal may still be possible or that C&W might be able to persuade China's powerful Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) to enter into a strategic alliance. If this does not materialise then analysts believe that Hongkong Telecom's share price will be knocked for six.

The problem is China Unicom does not have the money to take a big stake in Hongkong Telecom, unless it can find financing on very favourable terms.

## Telecom rumours boost Hong Kong market

Marjorie Mowlam, Northern Ireland secretary, was yesterday drawn into the row between Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) and its regulator over price cuts for customers, writes Chris Godsmark.

Patrick Haren, NIE chief executive, wrote to Ms Mowlam to put the company's case after Douglas McIlodon,

the regulator, unexpectedly rejected the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's advice over price controls. Mr Haren said it was unclear whether Ms Mowlam had the power to override the regulator. "We want to try to make sure she understands the issue," he added.

The MMC had said NIE's revenues should drop by 27 per

cent from April, compared with 31 per cent proposed by the watchdog. It was the first time a regulator had rejected the MMC's findings.

Mr Haren reiterated that NIE would take the regulator to the High Court if he tried to impose tougher price cuts. "Our legal advice says we don't have the discretion he pretends to have."

Skills shortage  
hits builders

Michael Harrison

Building employers yesterday called on the Government to provide more funding for youth training amid fears that worsening skills shortages could throw the industry's recovery off track.

According to the Construction Confederation's latest quarterly trends survey, nearly two thirds of firms now report difficulty in hiring bricklayers while four in 10 report shortages of plasterers, carpenters and joiners.

Sir Martin Laing, president-designate of the confederation, said that overall there had been a big improvement in business optimism with output and trading prospects both up strongly. However, he added: "The one cloud on the horizon is the growing evidence of skills shortages. This makes it crucially important that the industry rapidly builds up training programmes which will deliver the skilled workers we shall need into the foreseeable future."

Sir Martin said he was mak-

ing urgent representations to the Department of Education and Employment to secure a new Youth in Construction Training Scheme providing places for an additional 10,000 young people.

The survey shows a marked rise in activity with output forecast to rise by 3 per cent a year for the remainder of this decade. The number of companies reporting success in tendering is also up while tender prices and margins are increasing.

The balance of firms reporting an increase in output compared with the previous quarter was 37 per cent against a figure of 16 per cent in the last survey. The only region to report a decline was London.

Meanwhile, a balance of 53 per cent of firms expect output to rise in the coming 12 months while 43 per cent expect to take on more employees. The proportion of contractors working at or near to full capacity is more or less unchanged on the previous quarter at 34 per cent.

# STOCK MARKETS

FTSE 100

Dow Jones\*

Nikkei

\*The Japan index is graphed in US dollar

FTSE250: World Index

## Indices

Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	4580.40	+42.90	+0.9	4580.40	4056.80	3.54
FTSE 250	4510.40	-8.80	-0.2	4728.40	4469.40	3.99
FTSE 350	2226.20	+15.90	+0.7	2226.20	2017.90	3.55
FTSE SmallCap	2301.60	-3.25	-0.1	2374.20	2178.78	3.03
FTSE All-Share	2188.16	+14.26	+0.7	2188.16	1989.78	3.51
New York*	7187.19	+101.54	+1.4	7225.32	5032.94	1.73
Tokyo	20061.81	+12.91	+0.1	20180.92	17303.85	0.80
Hong Kong	13740.30	+134.39	+1.0	13888.24	12055.17	3.12
Frankfurt	closed		-	3598.28	2848.77	1.52

Statistics as of 9 May

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling	US medium gilt	US long bond	Money Market Rates	Bond Yields	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year
UK	6.25	6.88	7.06	8.17	7.13	8.27	US	6.72	8.34
Japan	0.48	0.84	2.51	2.55	-	-	Germany	3.09	3.51
France	5.75	6.50	6.51	6.54	-	-			

CURRENCIES

Other Year average index and Oil Price High in 1980 years

Pound

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
\$ (London)	1.6207	-1.58c	1.5182
\$ (NY)	1.6206	-1.65c	1.5243
DM (London)	2.2673	-4.65c	2.2019
¥ (London)	200.828	-13.81c	159.546
£ Index	98.8	-1.5	84.1

Dollar

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
\$ (London)	0.6170	+0.000c	0.6596
\$ (NY)	0.6171	+0.000c	0.6560
DM (London)	1.2075	-1.15p	1.5183
¥ (London)	123.795	-1.05	105.230
£ Index	104.8	-0.4	96.2

OTHER INDICATORS

	Yesterday	Day's change	Year Ago		Index	Latest Yr Ago	Next Yr
Oil Brent \$	18.39	+0.27	19.30	RPI	155.4	+2.60c	150.9 18 May
Gold \$	344.20	+2.9	394.00	GDP	109.7	+2.89c	107.0 25 May
Cash	312.2	-3.9	322.0	Share Price			

BT r  
£15br

Chris Godsmark and  
Cathy Newman

Under threat: ...

Brent V  
£1m p

Willcock







## Footsie passes 4,600 as institutions bank on financials

## Data Bank

174

500 MILLAR PERMANENTLY

Eurowcamp, during camping holidays in France, is holding at its year's high of 246p with a mixture of takeover and trading hopes influencing the shares. Acquisition Airtours, with a similar operation to Eurowcamp, hovers on the bid horizon. Stockbroker John Siddall's keenness stems largely from trading considerations and analyst Audrey Carroll expects profits of £11m this year against

❑ Frost, the petrol retailer squeezed numerically by the industry giants, is on course to nearly double profits. Crédit Lyonnais Laing analyst Ian Jermin expects profits to reach £21m this year against £10.4m last year. He is looking for £24.3m in 1998. The shares are 124.5p against the 269.5p before the petrol price war erupted.

stock market reporter of the year

on the oil market. "Success stems largely from trading considerations and analysis," says Audrey Carroll, expects profits of £11m this year against £9.3m last time. The shares rose 162.5p in November.

□ Frost, the petrol retailer squeezed unmercifully by the industry giants, is on course to nearly double profits. Crédit Lyonnais Laing analyst Ian Jermine expects profits to reach £21m this year against £10.4m last year. He is looking for £24.3m in 1998. The shares are 124.5p against the 269.5p before the petrol price war erupted.

[illegible]

هكذا من الاصل



853.1	940.2
209.8	225.0
320.0	338.9
1975.3	2079.3
1754.5	1714.3
150.5	
143.8	
733.6	740.0
467.9	512.7
430.7	518.7
289.3	304.6
364.6	363.6



## sport

## Hill's agony should only last to end of season

## Motor racing

DERICK ALLSOP  
reports from Monte Carlo

Perhaps it just wasn't what Damon Hill expected yesterday. Certainly it was outrageous over the top, even by Monaco's standards: a parade of celebs and wannabe celebs in costumes you can only assume were discarded by Elton John and Madonna.

Sponsors' functions are part of a racing driver's job and Hill probably looked no less at ease than Sergei Bubka and Catherine Oxenberg, two other "ambassadors" of this commercial enterprise. Prince Albert, of course, had seen and done it all before.

Hill, however, had seemed especially restless down at the circuit and flaunting with the peacock set was patently not his idea of preparation for tomorrow's Monaco Grand Prix.

Formula One's reigning champion has much on his mind, and when he has it shows. Four races and 10 finishes adds up to a depressing start with Arrows-Yamaha, the more so when Williams-Renault, the team that rejected him, remain pre-eminent and Jordan-Peugeot, the team he rejected, have emerged as the coming force.

Being seen at breakfast yesterday with Eddie Jordan inevitably activated the gossip, particularly since this was Monaco's traditional rest day. There was irony, too, in the words of Patrick Head, who along with Frank Williams decided Hill should be replaced in their team by Heinz-Harald Frentzen.

Head subscribes to the general belief that the 36-year-old Englishman will be a man in demand for next season. Hill has already indicated he intends to secure a competitive drive, be it at Arrows or with another team, and Head anticipates he will have his wish.

He suggests a potential destination for him could be McLaren-Mercedes who recently reached agreement with Williams over the transfer of their chief designer, Adrian Newey. Head, Williams' technical director, said: "Damon is one of the best in Formula One, one of the top drivers in the world, and teams are looking for top drivers. I'm sure he'll be in a competitive car next season."

"Damon's a well sorted enough type of person not to want to spend his life in the middle and back of the grid. I'm sure he would rather be at home with his wife and kids than doing that."

"As he said himself, he will want to be in a more competitive situation and I expect him to be. Either Tom Walkinshaw will convince him he will have the car he wants at Arrows next season, or he will find it elsewhere."

"Now that Adrian Newey is at McLaren, it wouldn't surprise me if he had an opportunity there. Prost is another possibility, although their car is essentially a Benetton and it depends what their new car will be like."

Hill has been linked also with Sauber and Benetton, but the former are unlikely to meet his technical requirements and the boss of the latter, Flavio Briatore, Head suspects, may not represent an obvious soul-mate.

As for Eddie Jordan's camp: "If Damon had gone to Jordan, he would have been running at the front and possibly winning races," Head said. Jordan agrees.

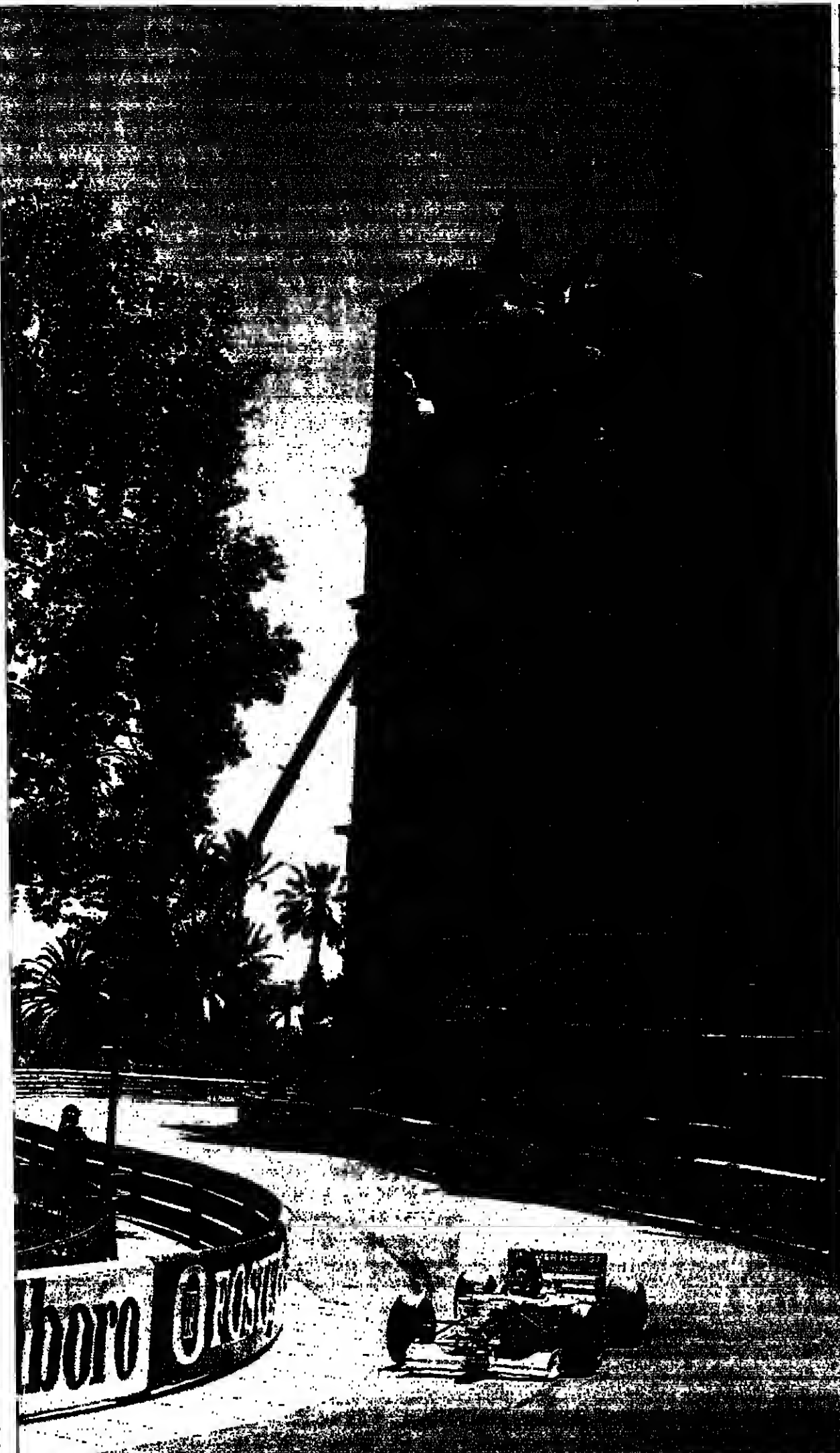
One team apparently not preparing a bid for Hill in 1998 is Williams. Head professed himself content with the progress of Frentzen, who had his maiden victory at the San Marino Grand Prix a fortnight ago.

Head said: "We're happy with Heinz-Harald and I believe he'll be more involved in the championship situation from now on. He didn't panic when things were out going right for him. He's a together kind of guy and has a nice dry sense of humour."

Another experienced judge of these matters, Ken Tyrrell, added his supportive voice to Hill's cause. He said: "Hill is certainly one of the top three drivers in the world today, behind Michael Schumacher and Jacques Villeneuve."

Schumacher, Villeneuve, Frentzen and perhaps Johnny Herbert, quickest in practice on Thursday, are expected to be embroiled in the contest for pole position when business resumes today, an advantage nowhere more crucial than on these narrow, twisting streets.

Schumacher and Frentzen have yet to record a win this season. They may not have to wait much longer. Hill dare not even torment himself with such a thought.



Street life: Damon Hill, the defending champion who has never won a grand prix in the Principality, guides his Arrows-Yamaha round the twisting roads of Monte Carlo

## Hawks hunt down Jordan

## Basketball

Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls experienced a new sensation on Thursday - defeat on their home turf in a National Association play-off for the first time since 1995.

The Atlanta Hawks took the reigning champions by the horns, winning 103-95 at the United Center in Chicago to tie the best-of-seven game Eastern Conference semi-finals 1-1. Steve Smith and Mookie Blaylock did the damage, Smith scoring 27 points and Blaylock 26, including eight back-breaking three-pointers.

Jordan collected 27 points and Scottie Pippen 24, but neither could rescue Chicago in the second half as they had in previous play-off games.

Atlanta, who could have won the first encounter, but lost 100-97 on Pippen's late three-pointers and Jordan's 20 third-quarter points, host games three and four today and tomorrow before the series returns to Chicago next Tuesday.

The Bulls won 69 regular season games but finished with three defeats in the last four and have not looked like the team who lost only 10 games out of 72 last season and rolled through the play-offs to their fourth title in six years.

The Bulls crowd could not

believe their eyes when Atlanta began their fightback with Bulls leading 68-67 and three minutes left in the third quarter. A 19-3 run took the Hawks into the lead, 86-71, with Chris Laettner scoring four of his 18 points and Mumbo five of his 19.

The Bulls again tried to rally behind Jordan and Pippen, but after they made it 93-86, Laettner scored on a drive and Smith hit two free throws to put the Hawks comfortably in front with 1min 26sec left.

After losing the two opening games, the Los Angeles Lakers were always ahead in beating the visiting Utah Jazz 104-84 in game three of the Western Conference semi-final.

Shaquille O'Neal was limited to 11 points and 10 rebounds before being ejected, but reserve Kobe Bryant led a balanced Lakers attack with 19 points - all but two in the fourth quarter. Van Elst added 17 points and Elden Campbell scored 14.

O'Neal played only 18 minutes before being called for two technical fouls and getting an automatic ejection with 7:36 left. The Lakers, however, were safely ahead.

Portland Trail Blazers, who were beaten by the Lakers 3-1 in the first-round Western Conference series, have dismissed their coach P J Carlesimo.

## Bradford set out to settle old score

## Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

Much attention tomorrow night will focus on how the Bradford Bulls will recover from their Wembley disappointment. An equally intriguing question is how a second successive Silk Cut Challenge Cup final victory will affect St Helens.

By a glorious piece of fixture planning, the "best two rugby sides in the northern hemisphere," as the Bulls' coach, Matthew Elliott, has called them, meet again at Old Trafford after the final. On the face of it, the loss of Robbie Paul, with a foot injury which Elliott says will rule him out for at least a month, strikes a blow to the Bulls' title hopes, but Saints' coach, Shaun McKee, is wary, especially after the late team changes Elliott made before the final.

"I've heard a whisper that Paul might play," he said. "I don't really expect it, but it wouldn't astonish me. In any case, I think Bradford go into this match with a lot of advan-

tages. They are at home, and we haven't forgotten them sticking 50 points on us last season."

McKee also expects revenge to come it. "It can be easier to pick yourself up than get your feet back on the ground," he said.

Saints will still be without Alan Huntie. Steve Prescott, Anthony Sullivan and Chris Joynt were all having tests today, but all are expected to play in a match that could put the Bulls four points clear of St Helens.

Two other clubs with top four aspirations, Salford and Leeds, meet at The Willows, but tomorrow is also a pivotal day at the foot of the table. Castleford will climb out of last place if they beat Paris at home, and they could hardly have a better chance.

Paris sacked their coach, Peter Mulholland, this week and there are growing doubts about the sustainability of the one club that makes European Super League European. Castleford's new coach, Stuart Raper, will be eager to seize on the disarray of a side that is being coached on a caretaker basis by its captain, David O'Donnell.

## NEWTON ABBOT

## HYPERION

6.05 Embankment 6.35 Bishops Castle  
7.05 Brave Tornado 7.35 Mister Horatio  
8.05 Lucky Eddie 8.35 Apache Flower

GOING: Good (Good to Soft in places).  
Left-hand, sharp, course with short run-in.

Course is N of town on A900. Newton Abbot station 1 m. Adjoining: "The Green" (100 yds). Accompanied under-16s free. CAR PARK: On rd 51 (50), remainder free. BLINDSPOT FIRST TIME: Narrow Street (vicinity), Flowering River (7.35).  
WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Embankment (6.05) won at Ludlow on Monday; Fellow Soldier (7.35) won at Wolverhampton on Saturday.  
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Bayford Place (8.35) has been sent 100 miles by Peter from Lewes, East Sussex.

## CORPORATE CLUB NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,000 added 2m 1f

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## sport

FOOTBALL: Coventry are in danger of slipping out of the top flight for the first time in 30 years. Phil Shaw spoke to their captain

# McAllister focused on the job in hand

Talk about tempting fate. A month ago, after Gary McAllister had coaxed Coventry City to successive wins over Liverpool and Chelsea, the club's vice-chairman remarked that they ought to change their name to Coventry Houdini.

As the Scotland captain prepares for the Sky Blues' final match of the season at Tottenham tomorrow, when anything less than victory will curtail their residency at Premiership level after 30 unbroken years, it may be pertinent to point out a little-known fact about the man whose name is synonymous with escapology.

Houdini, for all his incredible feats, met his end after inviting a spectator to test his muscle control by thumping him in the stomach.

The sucker-punch symbolism may seem painfully appropriate if Coventry relinquish a record of not having been relegated from any division since 1952. To McAllister's chagrin, their destiny is no longer in their own hands following a home defeat by Derby.

Coventry must now heat Spurs and pray, as their playmaker puts it, that Middlesbrough take no more than a point at Leeds and that Sunderland lose at Wimbledon. The scenario amounts to no more than "a glimmer of hope".

One irony in a situation riddled with them is that McAllister is looking for a favour from Leeds, whom he left for £3m last summer after six seasons that included a championship medal. He is confident Boro will find them hard to beat, taking heart from the fact that he was the last visitor to score in a League game at Elland Road, way back on Boxing Day.

Although McAllister experienced the drop with Leicester 10 years ago this month – when Coventry were gearing up for FA Cup glory against Spurs, of all teams – he acknowledges that the desperation to stay up

is fiercer now. The Premiership is the old First Division are, he says, "different planets" in terms of competitiveness, coverage and financial rewards. "I was just a young lad in '87," he says, now 32. "As your status in the game changes, so does your personal responsibility and I came as Coventry's record buy. Expectations here are also higher than they were at Leicester."

Almost for the first time since Jimmy Hill led them into the top flight, Coventry have shown genuine ambition by splashing out on players. Before Ron Atkinson became Hill's latest successor 27 months ago, Dion Dublin was their sole seven-figure signing. Atkinson invested in a further nine, while Gordon Strachan has recruited

Christmas when we won four and drew one. But then we had Dion sent off twice and suspended for seven games. That took away our most likely scorer. Even when he plays at the back he's always dangerous at set-pieces.

"There still seemed to be enough home games for us to get clear. But we drew with Wimbledon when we played well and lost to West Ham after starting brightly and going ahead. Then after winning at Liverpool and beating Chelsea, we drew with Arsenal, which would have been a good result if some of the other struggling sides hadn't started hitting championship form."

Previous scrambles to safety were achieved with what Strachan calls "hungry players"

most recent nerve-shredding finale. "You could really feel the tension as the Southampton and Man City scores filtered through to Highfield Road. I also remember the joy and relief on people's faces after it ended 0-0."

Strachan's dismay at going through it all again has manifested itself in some brutally frank remarks. I suggest that his words would have been better left to the dressing-room than the press conference; McAllister disagrees. "When he's criticised us, he's told the truth rather than just slugging us off. We feel we've let him down, and that could work for us on Sunday."

"I've worked with some top managers and I'm positive Gordon has what it takes. If the worst happens, it'll only be a blip in his career. The crucial thing in management is to have the players' respect. He's got it."

With his country's World Cup prospects delicately poised, there has been speculation that McAllister will leave Coventry rather than risk his Scotland place by playing in the Nationwide League. Any decision will be made by others – he is contracted until 2000 – though it could well be that in the event of relegation the club would seek to cut the wage bill by selling their highest earners.

In the meantime he is "totally focused" on Coventry's struggle against the odds. Apart from the nine lives they have enjoyed on the season's final day, there is another promising portent. Two years ago, Strachan inspired a 3-1 success which ensured the luxury of survival in their penultimate fixture... at Spurs.

On the last Sunday, also at White Hart Lane, McAllister led Leeds to the point they required for a place in Europe. This time a draw will definitely not do. However, if the Sky Blues slip their shackles once more, even those who aspire to Houdini's mantle will begin to talk about performing "a Coventry act".

**'The directors have put up a lot of money... I'm sure they expected us to be nearer a place in Europe than the bottom three'**

ed two more since stepping up last November.

The presence of his predecessor as Leeds and Scotland captain played a major part in convincing McAllister that Coventry could banish the culture of monotonous mediocrity. Perhaps he was unaware how deeply rooted it was: this will be their 14th bottom-five finish in 30 seasons and the 23rd time they have ended up below half-way.

"The directors have put up a lot of money and backed this management team as well as any board in the country," McAllister says. "I'm sure they expected us to be nearer a place in Europe than the bottom three."

So what's gone wrong? "We started poorly by losing at home to Forest – 3-0 going on 10 – and we've never been able to pull away from trouble. We had a good run around

from the lower divisions. A £30m outlay in three years means Coventry have arguably their most talented squad ever. Critics allege it is also one of the least committed."

McAllister, honest enough to admit that "scrapping doesn't come naturally" to him, has taken more than his share of flak from the fans. With hindsight, he would probably have needed to lead Coventry to the title to persuade them he was good value for such an unprecedented sum. Yet he disputes that there is any lack of passion.

"The players are hurting. Last Saturday was a real slap in the face. But while there's still a chance, we'll be giving it everything. I'm sure we'll know on the pitch how the other matches are going."

By another twist, he was in the Leeds midfield 12 months ago when Coventry staged their

## Guy Hodgson attempts to unravel the complexities surrounding the outcome of tomorrow's Premiership game

Liverpool in the mistaken assumption they were safe will be avoided. At least, Niall Quinn, who should tell Alan Ball of his misadventure to make a similar error. Which is unlikely as Sunderland are going to have their hands full just dealing with their opponents, never mind monitoring the radio. As Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, said on Thursday

hands." Not any more though.

Their fate slipped into the possession of others when they could manage only a win and two draws this congested week. "We always knew," Robson said, "that even if we had beaten Blackburn we would still have to go to Leeds and get a win so the mental state is the same. The disappointing thing is that we have to rely on other people."

Leeds in particular, who have performed the art of the bare draw and who have not conceded a home goal in the League since Boxing Day. "George Graham has made them difficult to break down," Robson said, "but

with Coventry as favourites at 1-9, Sunderland at 4-5 and Southampton 10-1.

Things are also far from clear-cut near the top. One out of Liverpool, Arsenal and Newcastle will join Manchester United in the Champions' League as runners-up, while the other two will have a UEFA Cup place. Which leaves only one more ticket to Europe which will be filled by Villa, Chelsea or Sheffield Wednesday.

In the end it might all come down to the simplest of differentials – luck. "If we just get the breaks," Robson said wistfully yesterday. It is a thought that will echo in a few minds tonight.

# Souness, Reid, Robson, Strachan – two from four will go

Then there were four. If nothing else Blackburn Rovers' draw with Middlesbrough on Thursday clarified the Premiership's relegation issue. Now 42 points is a haven and two from Southampton, Sunderland, Middlesbrough and Coventry City will be safe tomorrow. The other two will be contemplating life without full BSB money and trips to Port Vale rather than Manchester United.

Brian Little, who sampled last-day's two seasons ago with Aston Villa, put the relegation threatened manager's plight into words this week. "I sympathise with anyone in that

position," he said. "You work out results in your mind and if they don't go as you expect it's terrible. You can drive yourself crazy with worry."

At least Messrs Souness, Reid, Robson and Strachan will not have that problem much longer. It is just tonight that they will toss and turn working out the permutations. "If we win by two goals and they lose..."

Not that they are simple even for the uncommitted Southampton, on 41 points, will be safe if they get a point at Villa but if they lose they can be overhauled by Sunderland and Middlesbrough, the first by points, the second by

goal difference. Mathematicians will be to the fore in the latter case as Southampton's goal difference is minus five and Middlesbrough, who travel to Leeds, is minus nine.

There is also a scenario where all four teams will finish on 41 points which will mean the drop for Sunderland and, barring a miraculous scoring feat, Tottenham-bound Coventry, who, like Sunderland, have a goal difference of minus 17.

Got that? Good. Perhaps you can explain it fully to the managers concerned so that last season's farce when Manchester City were playing for time against

## Three-way battle for Premier safety

Scottish football

RUPERT METCALF

Thousands of Scottish spectators are in for a nervous hour and a half today as Kilmarnock, Motherwell and Hibernian battle for their Bell's League Premier Division status. These three clubs are scrambling to avoid a two-legged play-off against the First Division runners-up, Airdrie, later this month that will decide the re-

mainting top-flight place for next season. Motherwell's manager, Alex McLeish, whose side gave themselves the chance to save their Premier place with Monday's unexpected 2-0 win at Rangers, says he feels for his fellow managers, Jim Duffy of Hibernian and Kilmarnock's Bobby Williamson. "I have sympathy for Jim and Bobby, but I can only worry about myself. It's every man for himself," McLeish said. Williamson said: "It will be an

afternoon of high anxieties at three grounds across the country and, while you don't wish it on anyone, you only think about yourself. If you are in the play-off you still have a chance of surviving, but we're not thinking about that just yet."

The Scottish Cup finalists Kilmarnock, a point dear of the other two strugglers, entertain Aberdeen at Rugby Park. Motherwell are at home to Dunfermline, while Hibernian visit relegated Raith Rovers. If

all three win, Kilmarnock and Motherwell will survive. Hibernian have selection problems for the trip to managerless Raith, with Chic Charney and Kevin Harper both suspended. Chris Jackson injured and Willie Miller and Pat McGinlay both doubtful.

The other promotion place to be decided is in the Third Division, where Ross County will try to overtake Forfar Athletic for the runners-up place behind Inverness Caledonian Thistle.

## The stabbing pain of relegation

No 217

Sunderland

PAN'S EYE VIEW

Martin McFadden

In the last season in which Sunderland graced the turf of Roker Park, it is typical that we go into the final game uncertain of our Premiership safety. In spite of the late flurry of transfers, Peter Reid's attempts to treat a broken leg with a Band-Aid might prove too little too late.

One point at Wimbledon tomorrow might mean the difference between success and failure. Although we hold our fate in our own hands to a certain degree, our future hinges on a number of variables. One had decision from a referee, one doggy offside, a penalty not given, or a missed tackle could mean the difference between playing Manchester United or Bury at our new ground next season.

Whatever the outcome, the farewell to Roker against a Liverpool XI next Tuesday will be a heartfelt occasion. I first visited Roker Park on 24 October, 1970, at the age of three. We played Oxford in front of 16,376 and lost 1-0. I stood in the Fulwell End with my mam and dad under the floodlight. Main Stand side. It was actually a clever move by my dad to take me there at such a young age, because by the time I went to school, in Newcastle, I knew Sunderland were my team. I remember him asking me before my first day at school: "If anyone asks you which team you support, what do you say?" I knew the answer all right.

There was one other Sunderland fan at Archibald First School in Gosforth. We joined forces to battle the enemy, Gordon Armstrong became my best mate and would play for Sunderland 349 times.

At the start of the 1973-74 season we moved from the Fulwell End to the back row of the Clock Stand. I remember thinking that the Clock Stand was posh because it had its own half-time scoreboard, oddly positioned into the side wall as you could not see the main scoreboard in the corner of the Roker End from those seats.

During this period we were one of the top teams in the then Second Division. We had, famously, won the FA Cup and our next aim was to gain promotion. We eventually achieved our goal on 24 April 1976. We were at home to Bolton Wanderers and 51,983 expectant Sunderland fans were packed inside Roker. In those days, the Roker End held more than the entire stadium does today. A young Reid played for Bolton that day and he made no difference whatsoever. Towers and Robson scored the goals. It was the happiest day of my life. I was eight.

The 1976-77 season was my first watching Sunderland in the top flight, and my old man's insistence that we hadn't strengthened our squad sufficiently was not going to dampen my enthusiasm. However, it was soon obvious that we were going to struggle. Bob Stokoe resigned and Jimmy Adamson took over. He gave youth his chance by playing Rowell,

Arnott and Elliot, and for a while it looked like that we might achieve the impossible and stay up. In an echo of tomorrow's match, it all hinged on our last game of the season, away to Everton.

My dad picked me up from school that day at lunchtime, told the teacher I had a dentist's appointment and we hit the road for Goodison. The game itself was a nightmare and we lost 2-0. Some Everton fans threw a dart at me and it landed in my knee. I thought I was going to die, but I pulled it out, and although it hurt, it was nothing compared with the pain I endured watching my first relegation.

After you've tasted such failure, it becomes a test of character, of your loyalty to the cause. Throughout my time watching Sunderland, history has repeated itself over and over again. We develop a team capable of getting into football's top tier, then fail to invest in strengthening it. This season has proved no different. Which brings us back to tomorrow's fight for survival.

We face Wimbledon not knowing which division we will be playing in next season. Our special game at Roker will be emotional enough, but the threat of relegation will make tomorrow's situation almost too much to bear.

## MAJOR WEEKEND FOOTBALL FIXTURES

TODAY

3.00 unless stated

Nationwide Football League (Premiership) play-offs: First Division semi-finals

First leg: Crystal Palace v Wolves; Sheffield Utd v Ipswich

TOMORROW

4.00 unless stated

FA Cup Final

Aston Villa v Southampton

Blackburn v Leicester

Derby v Arsenal

Sheff Wed v Liverpool

Sheff Wed v Liverpool

Sheff Wed v Liverpool

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TEAM SHEET	
<p><b>Aston Villa v Southampton</b></p> <p>Last season: 2-0. Last five League matches: Aston Villa WLDL; Southampton DWLDL.</p> <p>Villa will give fitness tests to midfielder Draper and goalkeeper Borich as they try to secure the point they need to qualify for the UEFA Cup. Defender Dodd is set to return after suspension for the Saints, who may once again leave out Le Tissier and keep faith with Evans up front.</p>	<p><b>Man Utd v West Ham</b></p> <p>Last season: 2-1. Last five League matches: Manchester Utd WWDL; West Ham LDWL.</p> <p>For West Ham, Mancini is out with a knee injury. Keane is doubtful for the champions with an ankle problem, Giggs is already ruled out, but Scholes, Gary Neville and Butt should shake off injuries. Palister and Irwin are also available after being left on the bench against Newcastle with slight knocks.</p>
<p><b>Blackburn v Leicester</b></p> <p>Last season: Did not play. Last five League matches: Blackburn WLDL; Leicester LDWL.</p> <p>Hendry will play for Rovers despite a groin injury. Sutton may return after missing two matches with a hamstring strain. Leicester call up the youngsters Campbell and Wilson while the Frenchman, Rolling, starts his first match of the season at the heart of their defence.</p>	<p><b>Newcastle v Nottingham Forest</b></p> <p>Last season: 3-1. Last five League matches: Newcastle WWDL; Nottingham Forest LDWL.</p> <p>Lee is the main doubt for Newcastle, after a calf injury, but Ferdinand has recovered. Forest could be without Pearce (calf) and may make his full debut if the Dutchman is fit.</p>
<p><b>Derby v Arsenal</b></p> <p>Last season: Did not play. Last five League matches: Derby LDWL; Arsenal WWDL.</p> <p>McGrath will play for the first time since his return from a long-term injury. He will be the first of his fellow players to undergo a fitness test. Arsenal have a full squad from which to choose, with Adams expected to pass a fitness test.</p>	<p><b>Sheff Wed v Liverpool</b></p> <p>Last season: 1-1. Last five League matches: Sheff Wed LDWL; Liverpool WDLW.</p> <p>Wednesday have no injury worries but manager Peart may drop Hart and recall Donaldson. Owen – the substitute who scored in the 2-3 defeat at Wimbledon – may start for Liverpool but Barnes limped out of the Dave Higgins testimonial in midweek and is unlikely to win his place back.</p>
<p><b>Everton v Chelsea</b></p> <p>Last season: 1-1. Last five League matches: Everton DWDL; Chelsea LWWD.</p> <p>Everton's Phelan is ruled out against his old club because of a broken bone in his hand. Branch and Stuart face late fitness tests but Unsworth is serving the second match of a three-match ban. Chelsea will not risk Zola before the FA Cup final, but Vialli is set to make a rare start up front.</p>	<p><b>Tottenham v Coventry</b></p> <p>Last season: 3-1. Last five League matches: Tottenham LDWL; Coventry WWDL.</p> <p>The Norwegian goalkeeper, Beresford, is replacing the injured Walker. Spurs are also without Calderwood but Edinburgh is back after a long-term injury. Manager Strachan has included himself in the squad.</p>
<p><b>Leeds v Middlesbrough</b></p> <p>Last season: 0-1. Last five League matches: Leeds DWDL; Middlesbrough LWWD.</p> <p>For Leeds, Sharpe and the French winger Laurent are both set to start. Ravnelli is confident he will be fit for Middlesbrough, who must win at Elland Road to have any chance of staying in the Premiership. He has been having treatment in Italy on a wrenched back.</p>	<p><b>Wimbledon v Sunderland</b></p> <p>Last season: Did not play. Last five League matches: Wimbledon WLDL; Sunderland LDWL.</p> <p>The Dons' midfielder Earle will have a late test on a recurring ankle injury. Fear will deputise if Earle is unable to play. The Sunderland full-back Hall (ankle) is doubtful so Kubicki stands by. Bridges has recovered from an Achilles injury and is added to the squad.</p>







## Coventry Houdini

Gary McAllister talks to Phil Shaw  
about Premiership survival day, page 28

# sport

In Monday's 24-page sports section  
Glenn Moore's football men of the season; Derick Allsop at  
the Monaco GP; Chris Hewett at the Pilkington Cup final

A Chelsea fan who has already expressed a dim view of Wembley is likely to prove a lively Minister for Sport. **Mike Rowbottom** meets him

# Banks promises change of climate

The new Minister for Sport, Tony Banks, will of course be at Wembley next Saturday to see his beloved Chelsea. But he has turned down his invitation to the FA Cup final from the Royal Box. The politician who described himself as "gobsnacked" at being his present post will feel more comfortable among fellow Chelsea followers on their big Wembley day. As a season ticket holder, he had already acquired his ticket through the usual method of queuing. He subsequently accepted an invitation to be the club's guest, and passed his ticket on to another Chelsea supporter. But when the Department offered him a seat in the Royal Box, he declined.

"The idea of throwing my arms around the Queen when Chelsea score, or screaming 'the referee's a wanker' which I'm likely to do, probably would not go down too well in the Royal Box," Banks said yesterday. "I will also be wearing one of those big floppy-top hats and my scarf and rosette. When I'm at football, you know, I like to hug the people that are around me, we jump up and down and we dance. I'm not going to have my enjoyment of one of the great days of my club spoiled by being next to Royalty on a fixed abode."

The style is the man. Like a perennial wit at the back of the classroom, the 54-year-old member for Newham North West has harried and sniped from the Opposition benches, often to spectacular effect. His description of the hulkish former Defence Secretary Nicholas Soames as "his own personal food mountain", and his characterisation of the former Transport Secretary Steven Norris as "the Government's most proficient hullshifter" are but two of the verbal initiatives to have earned him rebukes within the House of Commons.

Many other barbs have been delivered on television, where Banks has become an amiable waspish, summonable presence over the years. Indeed, he was cooking for a TV food show when the call came from Tony Blair offering him his current post. His first thought was that the call was from his friend Rory Bremner winding him up. "I wasn't a Shadow Minister," Banks said. "I hadn't done anything to try and become anything. I hadn't modified my behaviour or my public statements. And it's probably not a good time to remind the Prime Minister that I backed Margaret Beckett for the leadership of the party."

"It flashed through my mind that Rory might be taking the piss. It was just as well I didn't say something like, 'Fuck off, Rory.' Because that wouldn't have gone down too well."

Perhaps not. But perhaps. Because, as Banks himself acknowledges, the Prime Minister picked him



The Messiah?: The laying-on of hands would be something of a novelty for a Sports Minister but Tony Banks, in full flow yesterday, is a man who believes in getting involved

Photograph: Robert Hallam

rather than the expectant Shadow Minister, Tom Pendry – precisely for his, what shall we say, vibrancy.

"The message that I got is that that is exactly what he does want," Banks said. "I suppose in a way he thinks you can be colourful and you can get things done and you can't actually do much damage. I mean, I'm not likely to end up plunging the country into war."

Leaning back in his chair at the Department of National Heritage, a tie and waistcoat girding his black denim trousers, he leafed through the latest copy of the *Big Issue*. "You can't get rid of all homelessness, Mr Blair..." read the front page message, continuing inside: "But you can have a damn good try. These are heady, challenging times for the new men and women of Labour, Banks included."

"There's no doubt about it, it's scary," he said. "We spent 18 years telling the Tories where they got it completely wrong. Now it's our turn to take action. The Prime Minister made it quite clear throughout the whole election campaign that we weren't going to promise anything

other than that which we could deliver. But the size of the vote we received will have excited enormous extra expectation. You can almost reach out and touch the atmosphere at the moment. There's a great feeling of relief in the country, a great feeling that a breath of fresh air has blown through."

Fittingly, the man who describes himself not as Old, or New, but "Vintage Labour" is now talking about creating a different climate in sport, although he steers clear of specific policy discussions on the understandable grounds that he is still getting to grips with a job he never envisaged.

For all that, the contrast with his predecessor, Iain Sprouat, could hardly be more marked. Sprouat, variously known as "Deep Sprouat", "No-throat Sprouat" and the "Invisible Man", resisted invitations to air his views in the media for almost two months after his appointment. He was, journalists were told, "oor ready".

Banks has already commanded more attention in a week than most of his predecessors managed in a ca-

reer. But for all his noise, he is no empty vessel. He has been a dogged defender of the rights of disabled people. As chairman of arts and recreation for the General London Council, he championed the rights of wheelchair competitors to take part in the London Marathon, a move which met with considerable resistance.

His abhorrence of blood sports is well known, and he is sensitive to other potential risks to animal welfare. He was among those who lobbied for the Grand National to reduce the size of its fences, and there have been some anxious noises among the National Hunt fraternity since his arrival at Cockspur Street.

He felt the outcry over Britain's lack of success at last summer's Olympics was disproportionate. "It's very easy for people sitting in front of their televisions to start whingeing on about athletes not winning as many medals as we would have wanted. One of the things that has always intrigued me is that we suddenly hear that Linford Christie has won a medal for Britain. I think you need to ask the question, what's Britain done for Linford Christie?"

"If you want to take national pride, as we do, in the achievements of our sports men and women, you've got to be prepared to invest in them. Not when they're famous and they've done it all thanks largely to themselves. But what are we doing now, today, to create the stars of tomorrow?"

Prioritisation, however, will be the name of the game.

"Gordon Brown has made it quite clear that there is not much point in sending a pantechnicon up to the Treasury expecting him to load it up with tenners. It isn't going to work like that so we are going to have to be imaginative in the way we allocate our resources."

Banks is intent upon becoming what he describes as "an honest broker, a catalyst, an enabler", and plans to sit down with what he describes as "the iconoclasts" within different sports in this country to discover whether policies can be improved.

Among the Labour pledges Banks is committed to carrying through are an end to the sale of playing fields, the creation of a youth unit within the sports ministry, and using Lot-

tery money to create after-school sports clubs.

The immediate topics to which he is turning his mind alongside the Secretary of State, Chris Smith, are altering the distribution of funds from the National Lottery and evaluating the establishment of a National Academy of Sport. Later this month the Heritage Dream Ticket – alias Smith and Banks – will visit the three shortlisted sites for the Academy at Upper Heyford, Sheffield and Nottingham.

The question of restoring competitive games at schools, a matter which greatly exercised his predecessor, is one which generates as much heat in Banks, although for different reasons.

He resists any invitation to have a pop at boxing, one of Sprouat's pet sports. "I boxed at school," he said. "I enjoy boxing, although I don't like it when it gets gory. But seeing 'Prince' Naseem box, seeing his movement in that, it's almost like poetry."

But when he contemplates the idea of competitive sports as such, he becomes less lyrical. "It's almost as if it was an ideological thing with the

Conservatives, because competition for them is a buzzword, and it's a buzzword as far as they were concerned in the economy as much as it was in sport. I am not ideological in my sporting approach. But the idea that the only sports worth encouraging are competitive sports, you know... The Department aide at Banks's right hand flinches momentarily in anticipation... "Is bollocks. It's ideological bollocks. And I hope that you ain't going to see much ideological bollocks around here."

"That's the thing that prepares people so they can go off and start cutting people's throats on the stock market, which, putting it crudely, is the way the simple minds of some of the previous Conservative politicians operate."

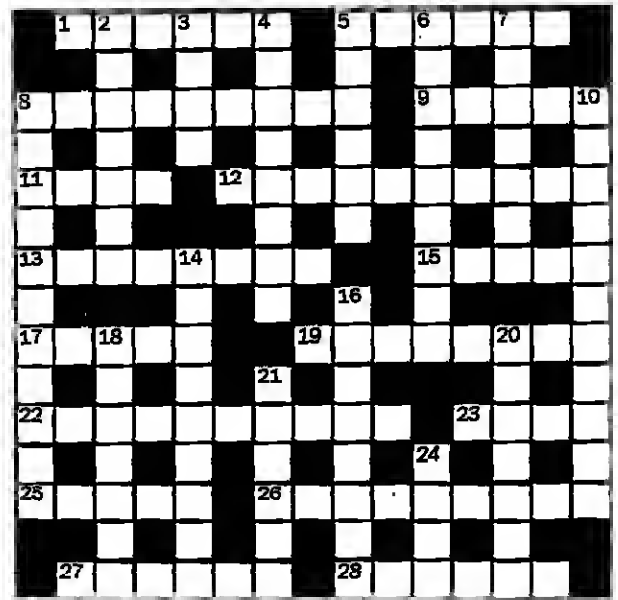
"Anyway," he added with a grin, "you shouldn't have got me going on that one. Touch the hutton and I'm off."

But it is, and will be, such fun to hear the new Sports Minister warming to his rhetorical theme in the next few years. Eighteen years of huff haven't stopped him dreaming – or protesting.

## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3295, Saturday 10 May

By Spurlus



Friday's solution

ANSWER: TOP SECRET  
PILFERAGE: STOUR  
J. P. MORRIS: HUBB  
THEM: WEATHERS  
TARDIS: SERMON  
E. N. T.: VU  
BOOGEY: BOOGEY  
ON THE LEVEL: FINE  
E. L. S.: K. K. N.  
UNABLE: UNPRECEDENT  
UNUS: G. O. R. S.  
SPARSITY: MELTIED

Last Saturday's solution

DISMISSAL: SWARM  
ON THE P. L.: A  
DENIM: OUTTUTTER  
STRENGTH: DIRM  
N. O. I. C. H.: L  
ANNURE: EKUREL  
R. E. T.: N. R. O.  
POWHADE: BAYLINE  
M. V. E. U. G.: U  
SOUTH: MANDENAUTY  
G. R. S.: S. O. G. E. R.  
UNIMATIVE: DUTY  
U. M. V. E. U. M.: U  
SIDING: ETIRANGITE

- ACROSS**
- Material you'll get for terrific price, subject to extreme reductions (6)
  - Just as the consumer requires? (6)
  - Left notice about Benefits Agency incomplete, missing initial (9)
  - Boredom shown by union leader involved in limitless court proceedings? (5)
  - Everyone's enquiring about crop harvest first of all (4)
  - Implement made from nickel, mostly safe to keep in pocket, originally (5,5)
  - New production of play in a church somewhere in the States (8)
  - Mean to get drunk (5)
  - One answer that's printed in boring journal (5)
  - Where some would be all at sea and in a mess? (8)
  - Modulation of voice by student in grip of illness (10)
  - Stop bishop making wounding remark (4)
  - Plant's decoration, brought in by journalist (5)
  - Make regular meals in or out (9)
  - Give away by secreting injudicious tear (6)
  - Painter needing to make a phone call from the centre (6)
- DOWN**
- Support structure in some chaotic situation (7)
  - New union member not at first given lift (4)
  - Fight continued, involving French policeman (8)
  - English lord established his tide rests on primogeniture (6)
  - Travelled by water, the hard way? (3-6)
  - Quantity of fish found halfway up staircase? (7)
  - A row about old article doctor's written in iambic verses (11)
  - I'm appearing in list topped by Spanish girl – that's priceless (11)
  - Short poem by academic churchman (3, 6)
  - Worker rolling barrel out, mostly (8)
  - Pleasant fellow featuring in a legend (7)
  - Instrument recording zero on vehicle during acceleration? (7)
  - Very careful with pen, one no good for filling (6)
  - Character showing heart, perhaps? (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: E. Suddale, Solihull; B. Sanderson, Wigan; A. Scott, Kildale; G. Lange, Oberhausen, Germany; C. Ward, Llandudnod, Wales.

## In the footsteps of the invisible men

Mike Rowbottom reflects on the impact of previous Ministers for Sport

In truth, Tony Banks does not have many hard acts to follow. Labour have only had one previous Minister for Sport – the former international referee Denis Howell, who fulfilled the role during the Wilson and Callaghan governments.

In 1991, Howell – widely regarded as being the best sports minister to date – looked back on what he described as 12 years of neglect by his Conservative successors, whom he collectively termed "helpless and hopeless."

Harsh words from a man no less direct in expressing himself than the latest incumbent. But Howell's analysis at the time was largely borne out by the facts, and there has been little since to provoke a major re-evaluation.

Since Lord Hailsham first persuaded Harold Macmillan to appoint a national sporting supreme in 1962 – it turned out to be Lord Hailsham – the post has all too often become a political graveyard.

Hector Munro, Robert Key, Neil Macfarlane, Robert Atkins, Dick Tracey – where are they now?

The job itself, which under the

## Those sports ministers in full

(Conservative unless stated)

1962-64	Lord Hailsham	1985-87	Richard Tracey
1964-70	Denis Howell (Lab)	1987-90	Colin Moynihan
1970-74	Eldon Griffiths	1990-92	Robert Atkins
1974-79	Denis Howell (Lab)	1992-93	Robert Key
1979-81	Hector Munro	1993-97	Iain Sprouat
1981-85	Neil Macfarlane	1997-	Tony Banks (Lab)

Tories never ranked higher than parliamentary under-secretary level, has been something of a poisoned chalice.

Macfarlane, who took over from the short-lived Munro in 1981, was jettisoned by Margaret Thatcher in 1985 after the Football Association's decision to rescind its punishment of Millwall and Luton following the riot at Kenilworth Road.

Tracey, a supporter of retaining sporting links with South Africa and a proponent of capital punishment, was installed as a tougher operator. But circumstances worked against him – he was soon complaining that he spent only 20 per cent of his working day on sport.

The profile of the job was

raised by Tracey's successor, Colin Moynihan, who took over at the age of 31 sporting an impressive curriculum vitae.

An Oxford Blue at boxing and rowing who coxed the British eight to an Olympic silver medal in 1980, the diminutive ladies' man established a reputation outside the sporting sphere when he squired Pamela Bordes to a number of events.

But events then swept Moynihan away. In the wake of British hooliganism at the 1988 European Championships, he was charged with introducing Mrs Thatcher's favoured solution of identity cards for supporters. In the wake of the Hillsborough disaster of 1989, however, Lord Justice Taylor rejected the

idea as being unworkable. Moynihan's trajectory dipped. Enter Robert Atkins, whose friendship with the dew Tory leader, John Major, led Nigel Lawson, then secretary of the Central Council for Physical Recreation, to bail them as "the Dream Ticket."

Rashly, as it turned out, Atkins, whose uncanny likeness to Christopher Lee caused his civil servants to refer to him as "Dracula", took an unconscionable time to get his teeth into the task. "What you won't hear is me telling sport how it should be done," he maintained – curiously, given that he was working on a review of Britain's sporting structure.

The bulk of the review's conclusions were rejected, however, by Iain Sprouat, the last of the Tory incumbents. He said the proposals were unwieldy and bureaucratic.

Sprouat, dubbed in some quarters the "Invisible Man", worked diligently enough in his four-year term, seeking to restore competitive games to schools – notably, and controversially, boxing – and working towards the seismic arrival of National Lottery funding. Banks's central task will be to oversee the consequent reshaping of the sporting landscape.

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SPORTS SECTION  
 ason: Derick Allsop at  
 the Pilkington Cup final  
 bottom met him  
 mate



IMAGE OF THE WEEK

Eyes front. And cameras and flashlights. The film festival at Cannes wouldn't be the same without the ritual of the stars, starlets, hopeful and hopeless lining up to have their picture taken. This time the victim was actor Gary Oldman. 'Over 'ere Gary.' Photograph by Brian Harris with 105mm lens at 250th of a second at f5.6 on 160 ASA film. To order a print of this picture (price £14) phone 0171-293 2534



# the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 10 MAY 1997

I watch my father's uncomfortable smile as he looks on at the scene, wanting a better welcome for his brother, but neglecting to intervene for fear of offending my mother and giving her the excuse he suspects she is looking for to extend her hostility to him.

I look to see what kind of danger Uncle Bango brought with him into our front yard on those Saturdays, but there was nothing I could identify as threatening. And I knew of no possession of his, or of any previous differences between either my mother and him, or him and my father, no family quarrel. All that I could see separating him from my other uncles was this story that he was ever willing to tell. So it had to be his story.

"Watch the landscape of this island," he began with the self-assured conviction that my mother couldn't stand in him. "And you know that they coulda oever bold people here surrendered to unfreedom." The sky, the sea, every green leaf and tangle of vines sing freedom. Birds frisk and flitter and whistle and sing. Just so a yard cock will draw up his chest and crow. Things here have their own mind.

The rain decide when it going to fall. Sometimes in the middle of the day, the sky clear, you hear a rushing swooping sound and voops it fall down. Other times it set up whole day and then you sure that now, yes, it going to fall, it just clear away. It had no brooding inscrutable wilderness here. There was no wild and passionate uproar to make people feel they is beast, to stir this great evil wickedness in their blood to make them want to go out and murder people.

Maybe that madness seized Columbus and the first set of conquerors when they land here and wanted the Carib people to believe that they was gods; but, afterwards, after they settle in the island and decide that, yes, is here we going to live oow, they begin to discover how hard it was to be gods.

The heat, the diseases, the weight of armour they had to carry in the hot sun, the imperial poses they had to strike, the powdered wigs to wear, the churches to build, the heathen to baptize, the illiterates to educate, the animals to tame, the numerous species of plants to name, history to write, flags to plant, parades to make, the militia to assemble, letters to write home.

And all around them, this rousing greenness bursting in the wet season and another quieter shade perspiring in the dry.

## WORDS OF THE WEEK

### And then it dawn on them that you can't defeat people

Earl Lovelace won the Commonwealth Writers Best Novel award with 'Salt' and has been on tour reading his work. This is an extract



On top of that they had to put up with the ooise from Blackpeople. Whole night Blackpeople have their drums going as they dance in the bush. All those dances. All those lascivious bodies leaping and beeding down. They couldn't see them in the dark among the shadows and trees; but, they could hear.

They had to listen to them dance the Bam-boula, the Bamboula, the Quelbay, the Manding, the Juba, the Ibo, the Pique, the Halicord, the Coromanti, the Congo, the Chiffon, the Banda, the Peacock, the Cherrup, the Kalinda, the Bongo. It was hard for Whitepeople. It had days they wanted to just sit down under a breadfruit tree and cool off, to reach up and pick a ripe mango off the tree and eat it.

It had times they just wanted to jump into the sea and take a sea bath, to romp with a girl on a bed of dead leaves underneath the umbrella of cocoa trees. They try, but they had it very hard. They walk a little distance and then they had to stop, perspiration soaking them, sticking their clothes to their bodies. It was so hot. They had to get these big roomy cork hats to wear to keep their brains cool.

They had to get people to fan them. People to carry their swords, people to carry cushions for them to sit down on. They had to get people

to beat people for them, people to dish out lashes - seventy-five, thirty-five, eighty-five. But, what else to do? People had to get licks to keep them in line. How else they coulda carry on The Work, feeding all those people, giving them rations, putting clothes on their back. And it was hard. It was very hard to mould the Negro character, to stamp out his savage tendencies.

They tried to make provisions for allowing him innocent amusement after Mass and until evening prayers, to see that he didn't cohabit without benefit of matrimony, to lay out the work for him to do, to pass around later to see that he do it. No, really, they try. They reduced the number of lashes to twenty-five. They tried in administering the floggings to make sure and oot to cause the effusion of blood or contusion; but, what else to do?

There was no natural subservience here. Nobody didn't bow down to nobody just so. To get a man to follow your instructions you had to pen him and beat him and cut off his ears or his foot when he run away. You had to take away his woman from him and his child. And still that fellow stand up and oppose you.

But these fellars here. These fellars was the most lawless and rebellious set of fellars they had in the Caribbean, the majority of them danger-

ous rebels exiled here from the other islands, men that had no cure, fellars whose sport was to bust one another head, fellars who make up their mind to dead, who land on the wharf from Martinique and Grenada and St Lucia and from wherever they bring them singing.

And it wasn't just two alone. It had women there that was even more terrible. They had to ban them from talking. They had to ban them from walking and from raising up their dress and shaking their melodious backsides. They wasn't easy. The plantation people couldn't handle them. They beat them. They hold them down and turn them over and do them whatever wickedness they could manage; but they couldn't break them.

And then it dawn on them that you can't defeat people. Then they find out that people too stupid to be defeated. They too harden. They don't learn what you try to teach them. They don't hear you. They forget. You tell a man to do something and he tell you he forget. You tell him to shoot and he forget to load the rifle. You tell him to get up at five, and nine o'clock he now yawning and stretching; he didn't hear you; or, he hear something different to what you tell him. You is the expert, but he believe that he know better than you what it is you want him to do, and he do it and he mess it up.

Four hundred years it take them to find out that you can't keep people in captivity. Four hundred years! And it didn't happen just so. People had to revolt. People had to poison people. Port-of-Spain had to burn down. A hurricane had to hit the island. Haiti had to defeat Napoleon. People had to run away up the mountains. People had to fight. And then they agree, yes.

We can't hold people in captivity here. But now they had another problem: it was how to keep people in captivity. It was how to set people at liberty.

From 'Salt' by Earl Lovelace. Faber & Faber £15.99. Copies can be ordered from Faber and Faber Ltd, 3 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AU. Cheque for £13.99 payable to Faber & Faber, or by credit card. Phone 01793 417134. Readings from Commonwealth writers at the Birmingham Readers and Writers Festival today - 0121 440 3838.

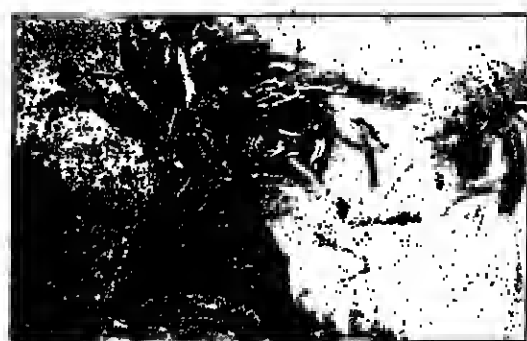
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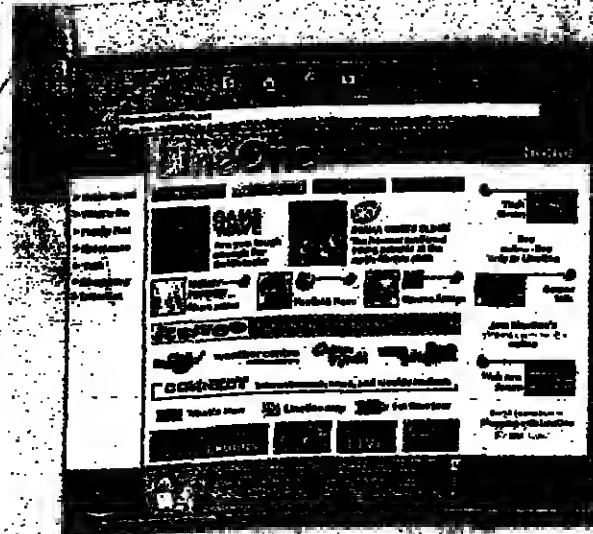
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# Enjoying a little murder at dinner

Chris Maslanka reveals the shocking truth about no-holds-barred, murder mystery, fancy-dress dinner parties

Fictional crime is, if anything, more popular than real crime, and it is clear that detective novels and murder mystery fulfil a basic human need. Games and crime fiction let us escape the hum-drum conundrums of the everyday. Our lives are already cluttered with half-started projects and half-finished problems. We want problems with a definite solution that can be demolished in a safe environment and restricted time-frame. We want fantasy.

This is the heaven afforded by crime fiction: the promise of adventure safely packaged to enjoy at leisure. But crime novels are essentially solitary and passive pursuits. Murder mystery games, on the other hand, are not only sociable but have the added dimension of allowing active participation, even to the extent of being the murderer.

For a murder mystery game to work well, the designer has to be even more meticulous than the crime novelist. The characters are no longer pinned to a page but are played by one's acquaintances, dressed up as outrageous characters. A successful game has not only to supply a plot, but also to guide the participants through a welter of detail at the same time as scouring such practical problems as what to do if one of the characters fails to turn up at the last minute because of a baby-sitter problem.

The best that I have tested so far are the *A La Carte* range - "Vintage Murder" (Bepuzzled, 6 players, £17.99) and "Pasta, Passion & Pistols" (Bepuzzled, 6-8 players, £17.99). They have worked hard to identify the key ingredients that make for

a successful murder mystery evening, foreseen the difficulties that could arise and made provisions for them.

First there is extremely detailed preparation. The host sends out invitations to each of the guests explaining not only the characters that they will adopt but also advising on dress and play. While guests are struggling with their characters and dress in such roles as Désirée de Bouze "elegant, self-possessed chateleine of Château de Reims", or Rocco Scarfazi, "rumoured to be in the 'laundering' business, the host is busy arranging the ambience and the food. Here the attention to detail was excellent: there is advice on lighting, music, place settings and, most importantly, sustenance. Full dinner menus are provided, drawn up by expert cookery writers.

At the same time as recognising that having the right food is as important to crime mystery as it is to seduction, *A La Carte* recognises that it is your evening and is flexible enough to include easier and cheaper alternatives for the less expansive host.

Even if you skip on the details, the game will still work, but the inclusion of detailed notes helps to stress an important fact: a key element in murder mystery is fantasy: people are given the opportunity to be exhibitionists. A safe and well-prepared arena is provided for you to act like a Mafioso or to don a black leather dress and be a tart for the evening.

*A La Carte* gives full weight to the importance of the fantasy element and they include something that, from my survey of other available games on the market, seems unique to them: preceding and separating the three

question and answer rounds are sections of dialogue which are "to be acted out with as much expression and accent as you can muster for your character." These dialogue sections contain information but also serve to break the ice and, crucially, to model the behaviour appropriate to the characters.

In "Pasta, Passion & Pistols"

solve the problem of what to do if someone fails to turn up as they can simply slot into one of the six key roles without thereby affecting the smooth running of the plot. Although in games such as "Pasta, Passion & Pistols" and "Vintage Murder", the planning has been done for you, that does not mean that the players can just sit back

getting in being Marco Roni or Clara Voyant, or how good the food is or how intoxicating the wine.

The necessary information is imparted in many ways, partly by reading the booklets and by questioning other characters and assessing their replies. You are given very structured guidance on the questions to ask, what you are trying to elicit and what to hide. There are the dialogues and the re-enactment of scenarios prompted by the floating characters. There are also *Cluedo*-esque and tangible clues such as letters which add further authenticity. And, in case you have drifted off, the cassette brings even the most distractable up to speed at the end of each round by providing a timely and humorous résumé of what people should have gleaned of the investigation. (Again, this feature is unique to *A La Carte* and reflects their awareness of things which could hamper the flow of the game). This approach makes the assimilation of the key facts easy and does away with the need for making notes on napkins.

Finally, of course, there is the solution to the mystery, the moment to which all the preparations have been directed. Although the mystery contains an element of competition, it is essentially sociable: there are no winners or losers. Just as much fun is had from acting out a character and hanting as in guessing how the crime was committed. No-one is left feeling a failure or left out but ready to return to the everyday less soluble problems with renewed vigour.

What *A La Carte* provides is a spectacle. An evening's entertainment to splash out on in which what is important



June Duprez hanging around in the 1945 Agatha Christie film 'And Then There Were None'

to be there are also two 'floating characters' whose function is to encourage re-enactment of scenes, to "get people off their chairs and demonstrate what really happened" - adding character to the camaraderie. These "floating characters" also

and pig out all evening. There is, after all, a murder to be solved. As the drama unfolds, a certain amount of information has not only somehow to be got across to the players; it also has to be absorbed by them no matter how carried away they are

## Games people play

Pandora Melly on wives battered with mallets aforethought

Anberon Waugh, 57, Editor of *The Literary Review*

I've never been able to cope with moving balls as I haven't very good eyesight. But I can hit a stationary ball, and I find that Croquet is one of the few things I'm very good at, particularly on my home course.

I do slightly have my own rules, because the traditional game can be quite boring as you always have one partnership playing miles ahead of the other through different hoops. It's better if everybody plays through the same hoop. A hit like golf, except that you can croquet every ball that tries to get through a hoop, and as soon as the second ball and partnership have been through the hoop, the turn passes and you're on to the next one.

Perhaps I should explain that when you croquet a ball, you hit a ball with your hand, then you put your hand up against it and have another hit, then you have a third hit independently, which gives you a tremendous advantage.

Croquet is considered a rather vindictive game, hit it needn't be, although sometimes people lose

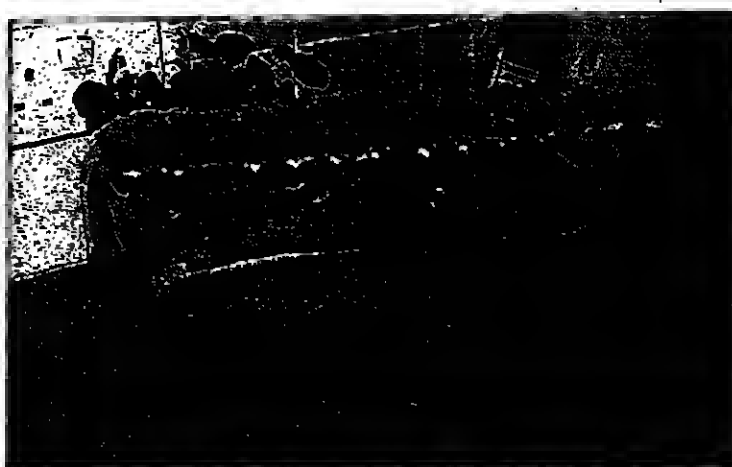
their tempers. On one occasion, I saw the beautiful wife and the ex-editor of a famous daily newspaper being struck by her husband with a croquet mallet, which is a very dangerous thing to do.

It is a lovely game, because tactics and skill are of equal importance, and it also works off your aggression a tiny bit. A lot of players are very good at hitting balls but they can't do the tactics. You can knock your opponents for stiff if you want to, but it's the end of your turn. When you're using other people the whole time to help your ball along, which makes me think that the ideal psychological profile for success at Croquet is "happy and ruthless".

Historic croquet hoops and mallets will be on show at: "With Mallets Aforethought", an exhibition to celebrate the centenary of the Croquet Association, at the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum starting Tuesday 13 May. Closed on Mondays, (except bank holiday Mondays), not open to the general public during the Lawn Tennis Championships. £2.50 adults, £1.50 concessionary. (0181-946-6131).

## Don't junk it ... use it

Save some bread by using your loaf



Using your loaf in an intelligent manner: the right way

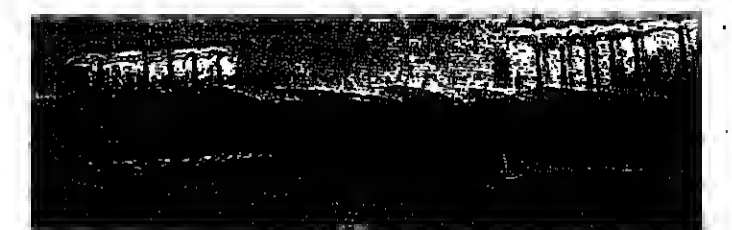
A basic bread-and-water recipe this week: the water-bottle bread bin. You will need two of those large plastic mineral water containers that look like small petrol cans, but make sure you get the slightly ribbed ones which are a little wider at the top than at the bottom.

After drinking the water, cut the top off one of them just past the point where its shoulder begins to widen. Then cut the other one lower down. Your

decision on where to cut depends on the length of your loaf of bread.

Slide one half into the other and there you have it: an elegant see-through, water-resistant bread container. If you want a matching bread bin for French loaves, you can make one as long as you like from a number of plastic soft-drink bottles. You can even create a telescopic, slide-and-fit effect.

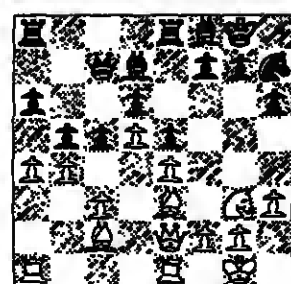
Bawn O'Beime-Ranelagh



Failing to use your loaf intelligently: the wrong way

The games page is edited by William Hartston

### Chess William Hartston



There were a couple of moments in Deep Blue's victory in the second game of its match against Garry Kasparov when the computer showed that its massive calculating power has enabled it to move into areas of strategy that other machines cannot reach.

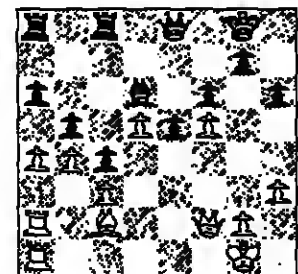
The first came in the diagram position when Deep Blue, playing White, moved its rook from e1 to c1. The move appears pointless, yet conceals a good deal of venom. First, Black is discouraged from playing ...cxb4, because his queen would then be on the same open line as the white rook; second, White opens the possibility of playing a later c4 himself, again embarrassing the queen.

When Kasparov replied by closing the game with ...c4, it was clear that Recl had served its purpose. As every experienced Ruy Lopez player knows, once Black has played ...c4, he not only deprives himself of Q-side counterplay, but also gives White the opportunity to play f4, gaining control of d4 if

Black replies with ...exf4. Deep Blue must have worked all that out for itself before playing Recl.

After 23.Recl c4, the machine again showed the depth of its calculations by playing 24.Ra3. Humans know the plan of Ra3, and doubling rooks on the a-file before playing axb5. Deep Blue once again worked it out from first principles.

The next surprise came a dozen moves later.

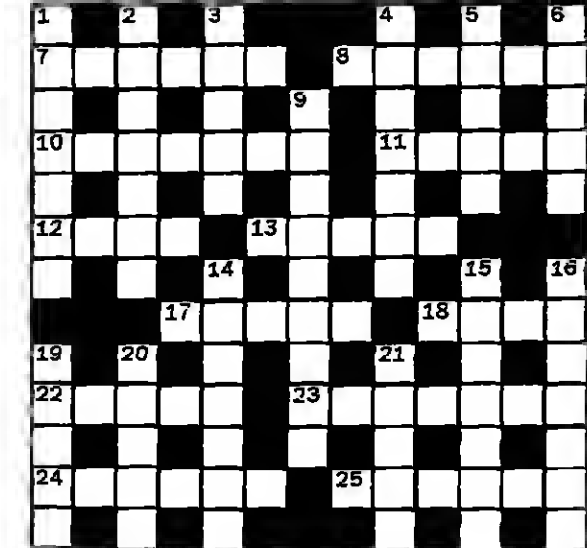


In this position, White has a clear advantage thanks to his passed d-pawn and chances of attacking h5. Everyone expected Deep Blue to play 36.Qb6, with the double threat of 37.Qxd6 and 37.axb5. Black would then have to gamble on 36...Rd8 37.axb5 Rxb8 38.Qxb6 e4 followed by Qe5 with counterplay.

Scorning the materialistic approach, however, Deep Blue played the patient 36.axb5 axb5 37.Be4, keeping Black squashed and leaving his own attack for later. It was a very human sort of decision for a machine to make.

### Concise crossword

No.3295 Saturday 10 May



#### ACROSS

- 7 Admonished (6)
- 8 Making mistakes (6)
- 10 Bird (7)
- 11 Piece of furniture (5)
- 12 Slope (4)
- 13 Poison (5)
- 17 Hawaiian greeting (5)
- 18 Scented powder (4)
- 22 French river (5)
- 23 Inequitable treatment (3,4)
- 24 Injury (6)
- 25 Deepen channel (6)

#### DOWN

- 1 Ungainly (7)
- 2 Paper-folding (7)
- 3 Commenced (5)
- 4 Speech (7)
- 5 W Indian dance (5)
- 6 Concur (5)
- 9 Swiss wind instrument (9)
- 14 Hypersensitive reaction (7)
- 15 Cigarette-butts (3-4)
- 16 Surgical implement (7)
- 19 Unrefined (5)
- 20 Punctuation mark (5)
- 21 Prize (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Kelp, 4 Stable (Captain's table), 7 Doctorate, 9 Nail, 10 Queen, 11 After, 13 Yearly, 14 Thorpy, 15 Employ, 17 Enamel, 19 Wince, 20 Goat, 22 Atom, 23 Raspberry, 24 Fickle, 25 Agast, DOWN: 1 Kidney, 2 Tool, 3 Notify, 4 Sorbet, 5 Alibi, 6 Evenly, 7 Disappear, 8 Extremely, 11 Allow, 12 Rhine, 13 Eagle, 16 Yippee, 17 Ecstacy, 18 Limpet, 21 Talk, 22 Arch.

### Bridge Alan Hiron

Game all; dealer North

North  
♠ Q 6 2  
♥ A 10 9 3  
♦ A K  
♣ J 7 5 2

West  
♠ 9 7  
♥ Q 7 5 2  
♦ 10 8 5 3 2  
♣ K 3

East  
♠ A J 10 8 3  
♥ K J 6  
♦ J 9 6 4  
♣ 8

South  
♠ K 5 4  
♥ 8 4  
♦ Q 7  
♣ A Q 10 9 6 4

North opened 1♣. East bid 1♦, and South faced his first problem. Clearly too good for 3♦, he considered 2NT but decided that (if partner passed) it was unlikely that the hand would play for exactly eight tricks. His final choice, of plunging to 3NT, was not too bad an idea. What would you have bid? 2♣. I hope - if partner has a spade bolster, the no-trump game may well play better from his hand.

With South as declarer in 3NT, West led ♠9. After the

### Perplexity

Mixed doubles:

Slender harm than armed static trot.

The above sentence conceals three connected one-word answers. To find them, all you have to do is to group the six given words into three pairs, then rearrange the letters within each pair. A prize of the new Chambers 21st Dictionary will be

vulnerable overall it seemed likely that East held the missing ♠K, so declarer let the lead run round to his king, crossed to a top diamond, and ran ♠J. West won, returned his remaining spade, and was delighted to watch his partner take the next four tricks.

That had been the second problem that South had failed to solve. In spite of 3NT being played from the wrong hand, he could still have recovered. Any ideas? Try the effect of playing ♠Q from dummy at trick one! If east decided to duck, declarer finds that he has a second guard in spades. So, almost certainly, East wins and returns the suit but now South wins immediately, crosses to dummy as before with a diamond and finesse in clubs. The difference now, of course, is that West has no more spades to play and declarer has nine tricks.

Note the importance of winning the second spade and not ducking, for then an astute East will switch to a heart and so establish five tricks for the defence.

awarded to the sender of the first set of correct answers, when we open entries on 21 May. Answers to: Perplexity. The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL.

26 April report: Dates in May that cannot be turned into valid sums under the rules given are 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 22 and 27. If a decimal point is also allowed, then all except 6.5, 9.7 and 9.9 can be done. Winner: Ben Driver (London)

### Backgammon Chris Bray

I have often praised Jellyfish, the best commercially available backgammon program but now is an appropriate time to remind you of this strangely named product as there have recently been further developments.

Jellyfish is based on neural net technology and first came on the market some three years ago. Until that time "Expert Backgammon", designed on more traditional lines, had been the leading program. Jellyfish consists of two elements, "Player" and "Analyser". If you just want to play a game then only the Player version is required. Analyser provides the facility to roll out positions thousands of times to gain an accurate understanding of the correct plays and doubling decisions in a given position. The program runs under Windows 95 or Windows 3.x.

The Player version plays at an advanced level and you will have to concentrate hard to have a chance of beating it. It has excellent options such as seven different playing levels. It will comment on your moves and even suggest better ones - what's more it's nearly always right! You can record your games and matches and then either print them out or replay them on the screen move by move, with comments if required. It is a superb learning tool and I would recommend it to anyone who is serious about improving his or her game.

Version 2.0 improved significantly on Version 1.0 and now comes news of Version 3.0. This new version plays an even stronger game and in particular it has improved its playing of back games and prime versus prime positions. It has an improved user interface and is much quicker than previous versions (I have had no trouble running level 7 on a 486 100 Mhz PC). Both the new Player and Analyser versions are currently in the final stages of testing and will be available in late May or early June - in fact a trial version of the Player is available now.

The good news for those who only want the Player version, is that it can be downloaded from the Internet as shareware to try out. If you then want to use it regularly, you send the vendor a nominal fee (\$30) for continued usage. The Internet address for obtaining Jellyfish 3.0 is:

http://www.effex.no/jelly.html  
For those without Internet access you can contact the vendors directly at:  
Effect Software AS, Brugata 1, N-0186 Oslo, Norway. Tel: 0047 22 17 71 90 Fax: 0047 22 17 05 42



# Too silly for words...



**John Walsh**

meets  
**Julia Sawalha**

**T**here are two problems in Julia Sawalha's life. One is that people tend to confuse her with Helena Bonham Carter. They show her to her rival's chair (and vice versa) at awards ceremonies. The second is that she was born too late. Quite soon after you first meet her, you realise that she is, in fact, an unreconstructed Sixties chick masquerading as a Nineties actress. Everything about her - her hair, her opinions, her passions, her spare-time activities, her maquilage, her jewellery - even her taste in music - all yell "Sixties!" at you. If ever there was a girl born to have a hunch of marigolds drawn in biro on her upper cheek, Ms Sawalha is it.

Which is odd, given that her fame still rests largely on her portrayal of a straight-laced teenager with nothing but contempt for Sixties culture, as expressed in the clothes, habits and vocabulary of her mother. Saffron and *Absolutely Fabulous* returned to the nation's television screens last week, to confirm that there's no prig like a female prig, and no one who can embody one better than Julia S.

Another side of the actress can be seen next weekend, when Channel 4 presents *McLibell*. Dennis Woolf's three-hour reconstruction of the three-year court-room-jousting tournament between the McDonald's burger Leviathan and the two London anarchists, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, who dared to say rude things about them. Sawalha plays Steel as a sullen, endlessly sceptical figure amazed to find that she may have right on her side after all.

Between these embodiments of scorn, she has taken to costume drama like a duck to *Orange*, playing the hoydenish, soldier-mad Lydia Bennett in Andrew Davies's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* and the put-upon Mercy in *Martin Chuzzlewit* a year earlier. "I like the way everything swings back and forth in this job," she remarks. "One minute, I'm looking after a boozy mother in a modern comedy, the next I'm being beaten around the head by Keith Allen in a Dickens novel..."

So when you meet her you're prepared for a bit of a shape-changer, a sophisticate, a wary, eyebrow-raising act-tress. Instead, you get a voluble giggler with a Sarf London accent and a sensibility that's closer to Biba than Prada.

Sawalha is, shall we say, a surprise. Nothing you have seen, on small or big screen, prepares you for how amazingly pretty she is in the flesh, her completely round, doll-like face surrounded by a Medusa jungle of chestnut curls that cascade over her brow. Her eyes are piercing grey-green and her whites shine like Martin Bell's best suit. Her long eyelashes have an unearthly, tarantulan quality that you might ascribe to art rather than nature, except that nothing about Sawalha appears to be false.

She is, it turns out, a vegetarian, an environmentalist, a feminist and a poet; but also a drinker, a smoker, a good-time girl and a chatterbox of appealing indiscretion. Nobody who can be so many contradictory things is trying to sell you an image of themselves. She sports a silver bracelet and three rings, with another one, set about with runic Eastern symbols, on a chain around her neck. And she laughs a lot, like an exhibit in a demonstration of hysteria before Victorian medical students. She seems, by turns, too silly for words, and too gorgeous to be true. Why had she wanted

to play Helen Steel? Was it a personal crusade? "Yeah, definitely. When my agent rang me and said the words *Greenpeace* and *McDonald's*, I didn't have a clue about the *McLibell* case; but when I met Dennis Woolf, I thought, I've got to support this. I was a *Greenpeace* supporter already, and then I found that London *Greenpeace* is just five people and I got really interested." As the world knows, in 1985 the quintet were distributing leaflets (headed "What's Wrong with McDonald's?") laying several accusations at the hooves of the beef giant: that they tortured animals, caused food poisoning, exploited staff, sold food linked to cancer and heart disease; and, for good measure, that they were destroying the rainforests. McDonald's tracked down the leaflet's perpetrators and served libel writs on them. Three apologised; Steel and Morris didn't. The ensuing trial was expected to last three or four weeks; instead it dragged on for a record 313 days. "I really admired the story of their struggle not to be silenced," said Sawalha. "I hadn't had the time or the chance before to use my name to help... I believe in people saying what they want if they believe in fighting a cause."

Could she have become involved in a different cause? Say, the Bridgewater Four? "No, there's something special about attacking big corporations - and especially McDonald's." What had she got against McDonald's? "It distresses me when I take my seven-year-old nephew out I cook healthy food, and he wants to go to McDonald's. He doesn't even like the food, he just wants the toys; the Happy Meals. I can't stand to see people walking down the street eating fast food." On the face of it, I said, the role didn't offer a lot of scope for an actress, being confined to long periods in the defendants' box looking cross and saying "Yeah?" to

the snooty QC with her hands in her jeans pockets. "Not at all," said Sawalha, "it was a challenge because you had to play it down so much. It's very hard to dramatise something factual and not make it look overdone; but also not to make it look so under-dramatised that it's dull."

Sawalha has been a keen environmentalist for years, since she went to Windsor Great Park and watched, unsmiling, as Winnie the Whale and friends cavorted for the audience.

"It was so distressing to see the dolphins banging themselves up against the wall, having to perform. It disgusted me." She is a fan of the ineffable Swampy, is deeply suspicious of the judiciary system and has little faith in the New Labour dawn. "I

*My Darling, My Hamburger*. I watched in fascination as she extracted a Silk Cut, nipped off the final couple of centimetres and lit up. Excuse me, I said, but why...? "I'm giving up smoking. I only smoke down to there..."

She is, as her surname gives away but her complexion does not, half-Jordanian. She grew up in Upper Norwood in south-east London. Her father Nadim is an actor (he plays the wise and chortling Dr Shaban in *Dangerfield*). Nadim created a Bedouin tent affair, made of satin, in the family dining-room, "and we would have feasts, with singing and dancing, with lots of arak, which is like ouzo and we were allowed to drink it because it was medicinal". Her mother is "from Surrey -

She considered the alternative route her life might have taken. "If I'd been a Muslim, I wouldn't be sitting here now." Where would she be? "I'd probably be an archeologist in Jordan." Wasn't it more likely she'd be married off to a Jordanian businessman and stuck at home dressed in a chador, minding the children and never going out? "Yeah, probably. But I'd still be diggin' around in my back garden."

God forbid, Sawalha decided for herself on an acting career at the tender age of 10. She went to the Italia Conti stage school. "I'd always gone to dance classes, while my sister went to full-time school. They seemed equal options. Everyone was going off to ordinary school and I just thought, I'd like to sing and dance for half the day..." On the first day, she found herself in acting class, sitting in a circle and being told that a lump of invisible magic clay was being handed round, which she had to transform into something.

"And you watch this thing coming round, and your imagination is going bonkers, and suddenly it gets to you and something happens, you perform, you do something because you have to. And I felt so satisfied afterwards. I've always had to confront my fears." Did she still get fearful? "I'm going to Manchester next week, to the Royal Exchange, to appear in *The Illusion* by [she consulted her right hand where the details were written at the base of her thumb] Pierre Corneille, adapted by Tony Kushner. I'm quite terrified..."

Sawalha has yet to play the kind of full-on, explosively "unrestrained" leading lady she is clearly capable of playing. She sweetly confesses to being "a vamp in my own time, my personal time". Her forays into churlish tended, in the past, to coincide with her relationship with Keith Allen, a legendary Groucho *habitué*. "The last time I was in the Groucho, I woke up

in the morning and my finger was all black and blue, and bent back. I couldn't work out what I'd been doing with it. And I'd left without my shoes. It's just not good for me to frequent such places. It's funny," she said as a random thought struck her. "I grew up beside Crystal Palace, now I live beside Alexandra Palace, and they're the two highest points in London."

It must be the muezzin in your soul, I said smartly.

"What's that?" A muezzin? A man who climbs to the highest vantage point in the city and calls the faithful to prayer.

"Oh," said Sawalha. It's another adorable trait of hers, not knowing things. I asked her what she thought of *Ellen*, the scandalous, Oh-my-god-she's-a-lesbian American sitcom. "I've never seen it. What is it?"

It's one of those Channel 4 imports, I said. Like *Seinfeld*.

"What's *Seinfeld*?"

And she means it. She's never seen *Cheers* or even *Friends*. Speaking of friends, I asked if she ever hung out with the two actresses with whom she must contest the period-costume territory in the future, Helena Bonham Carter and Kate Winslet. "No, I've always stayed away from other people in my profession. I've met Kate a couple of times. In fact, I lent her my bra once for a photo shoot." Come again? "She had a very see-through top on and I said, 'You going to be photographed like that?' and she said innocently, 'They asked me to.' I said, 'I'd put something on under that if I were you,' and she said 'I haven't got anything.' So I lent her my bra. I never saw her again." A thought struck her. "I never saw my bra again, either." And the divine Ms Sawalha goes off into another (surely terminal this time) fusillade of giggles.

More Biba than Prada: nothing prepares you for how amazingly pretty she is in the flesh

PHOTO: GLYNN GRIFFITHS

## ...too gorgeous to be true

**"I was going to vote for old Tony, but to tell the truth I lost my voting card. I was running around, a tiny bit pissed..."**

think they're all as bad as each other. And I didn't vote last week. I was going to vote for old Tony, but to tell the truth I lost my voting card. I was running round, a tiny bit pissed, at half past six in the evening..."

This Bridget Jones side of her nature can be either grating or enchanting, depending on your point of view. Julia Sawalha radiates a kind of wayward innocence, a girlish helplessness that would bring out, I'm afraid, manly-protector instincts in the most new-mannish of New Men. In her spare time, she says, she writes poems, sets them to music and plays them on the guitar. She likes Fleetwood Mac and Led Zeppelin. Her favourite book appears to be a teenage novel called

completely". Was she aware of being different from her schoolfriends? "Only from people saying things like, 'You're dirty, 'cos you're an Arab and you eat with your hands.' And I'd go home and say to my Mum, 'Are we dirty?' And she'd say, 'Tell them Arabs are a damn sight cleaner than any of them.'"

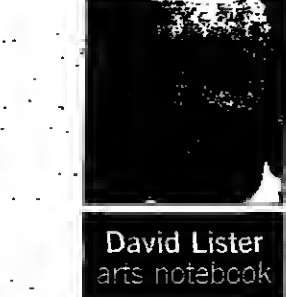
But I grew up very proud of my culture and very happy to have, you know, two sides... Was her father a Muslim? "No, he's a Christian. A spiritual man. But he never pushed any belief on us. When I was nine, I asked what God was, and should I believe in him and they said, 'If you want to pray at the end of your bed and believe in something up above, that's up to you.'"

**D**avid Helfgott of *Shine* fame is notoriously unlike other pianists. His singing along on stage to Liszt, untroubled by the fact that Liszt didn't actually write lyrics, has been well chronicled. Less well chronicled is the fact that Helfgott's manager, Austen Pritchard Levy, brilliantly effective as he clearly is, is not like other managers.

After all, it's not often that the manager of a world-famous pianist approaches you before his client's sold-out concert, to give you a written assurance that said client is "not a performing monkey". But sure enough, before the Royal Festival Hall recital by David Helfgott of *Shine* fame, Mr Pritchard Levy gave journalists a printed statement to "rebut the implication that audiences are now paying to watch a 'performing monkey' or 'freak show' and nothing more".

There had been a "hiccup" at Helfgott's concert in Boston, the manager explained to those of us who were until that moment blissfully unaware of the Boston concert, hiccups and all. "Helfgott's medication interacted abnormally with jet lag," he said, "and the effects of an abrupt climate shift from the height of a scorching Australian summer to the depths of a New England winter..." Say no more, I'm just sorry I missed what sounds like a concert memory to treasure.

Despite his manager's protesting too much, Helfgott's own enthusiasm remains gloriously, perhaps even sadistically, undimmed. One of the promoters told me, with a weary tone to his voice, that if the audience reception is good, as it usually is, Helfgott gets so carried away that he replays the entire concert backstage afterwards.



David Lister  
arts notebook

The teeth grind for two reasons at information sent out by BBC2 about the third series of *Room 101* - "in which Nick Hancock invites a celebrity guest to proffer his or her pet hates". First of all, Room 101 in Orwell's 1984 was not the home of your pet hate but of your greatest fear. More pertinently, the list of "celebrities" includes Jeremy Clarkson (television presenter),

Helfgott's enthusiasm remained gloriously, even sadistically, undimmed

Ulrika Jonsson (television presenter), Chris Tarrant (radio presenter) and, as a variation on the theme, Terry Wogan (television and radio presenter). The BBC's redefinition of celebrity to mean fellow broadcasters, most of whom have coffee in the same canteen as the show's presenter, is my choice for Room 101, be it the room for pet hates, greatest fears or just plain boredom.

On Monday, the Royal Shakespeare Company will launch its new season. So I took the opportunity to ask RSC artistic director Adrian Noble if it might by any remote chance contain *Othello*, a once highly regarded piece by William Shakespeare, though now decidedly out of fashion. The RSC has not performed it for eight years.

Unsurprisingly, it will not feature

in the company's new season, though Noble did say he thought "the time might be near" when the RSC could put it on again.

The RSC has run scared of staging the play because it has not had a black actor it deemed suitable for the role, and it will not countenance the supposed political incorrectness of a white actor blacking up.

That Noble says the time is near

when this can once again happen - and he was referring to a white actor playing the part - demonstrates a significant shift in thinking.

Curiously, the sensitivities over blacking up never extended from the theatre to the opera house. Plácido Domingo provokes no complaints when he puts on make-up to sing Verdi's *Otello*. In the meantime, in what I suspect is a misplaced fear of a backlash over a 400-year-old theatrical convention, we continue with the absurd anomaly of the RSC falling to stage one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies.

I'm told that Noble, who is dying to direct *Othello* for the first time, tried to woo film star Morgan Freeman over to play the part, but convincing Hollywood agents that playing the same part for two years for little money was good for the soul proved an uphill struggle.



# arts & books

## Postcard from Cannes

By Geoffrey Macnab

I don't think there is anybody whose life hasn't been affected in some way or other by an ism." Gary Oldman mumbled into his microphone at the press conference for his directorial debut, *Ni By Mouth*. The assembled backs in the Palais du Cinéma listened attentively as the cadaverous-faced actor described his personal battle with alcoholism and how it affected his approach to the film, a bleak, semi-autobiographical South London tale. Ironically, even as Oldman was detailing his problems with the bottle, the police were busy rounding up any drunks who had the temerity to wander near the Croisette. One emaciated old soak on crutches was bundled into a police car and driven away. He tried to protest, but the gendarmes paid no heed. Nor did any of the festival-goers or tourists.

During the Cannes Fortnight, the authorities clear the streets of human detritus with a zeal that makes Mr Clean look lax. Any signs of poverty are instantly erased. The fact that half the buyers and sellers who ply their trade with such braggadocio are probably leaking violent streaks of red on the balance sheet doesn't seem to matter. At least they look rich. That's the secret.

Not long after the old drunk was hauled away, Tronka Films' resident publicity mascot, the Toxic Avenger, was to be seen parading down the Croisette in his trademark red cape and Phantom of the Opera-style mask, handing out leaflets. Nobody batted an eyelid.

A few years ago, an American anthropologist by the name of Hortense Powdermaker flished her studies of a South Sea Island tribe and decamped to Hollywood to analyse how the natives behaved there. Ms Powdermaker found L.A. confusing enough, but one imagines that Cannes in May would have left her flummoxed. The festival is a two-week exercise in petty, hieratic rituals. Everybody has different badges. Your place in the food chain is immediately established by the piece of laminated plastic that hangs from your neck. Confusingly, one shade of white signifies immense importance, while another is worn only by the lowliest minions. A blue press pass is no use for overcrowded press conferences. Pink is better, but still no guarantee of getting you where you want.

At the start of the week, UK journalists caught wind of Oscar-winner Frances McDormand's new project,

*Johnny Skidmarks*. Given that the new feature-length cartoon, *Beavis and Butt-head Do America*, is playing in the market, this was at first taken as a mark of a healthy new prudence in American cinema. Sadly, when the backs sniffed a little closer, they learnt that McDormand's new movie was nothing to do with a certain incontinent character from *Viz*. In the US, it seems, skidmarks aren't anything to be ashamed of. In fact, you should be proud to leave them behind you – they're a sign of prowess behind the wheel.

One of the more imposing sights on the Croisette is a huge poster advertising a new film about Astérix the Gaul. Gérard Depardieu is to play Obélix. The image of the fat French actor, chubby-cheeked and with trademark twirly moustache, stares out insolently at passers-by. Somebody called Clavier is to act Astérix. But the poster doesn't reveal who

has been awarded the plum parts of Getafix the Druid or Postautomatix, the doughy postman.

Planet Hollywood's relentless march across Europe has now reached Cannes. The fact that one of this new theme restaurant's co-founders, Bruce Willis, happened to be in town for the world premiere of *The Fifth Element* (in which he stars) can safely be put down to coincidence. Visitors to Cannes will doubtless soon learn to appreciate the ready availability of hamburgers. After all, French cuisine can be a little bland.

Journalists aren't altogether happy at the new arrangements. They need separate press accreditation for each and every event that is taking place in Planet Hollywood, and even when they've negotiated that particular bureaucratic minefield, they're treated like pariahs (or drunks on the Croisette). "Media positioning in media areas is determined by first come basis," reads the publicity, "spots cannot be held or reserved." In other words, feel grateful if you are allowed to stand at the back.

One final note. Tony Curtis may not have made a worthwhile film in approximately four decades, but the bouffant-haired old actor is now a dab hand at the easel. There's an exhibition of his paintings (which might best be described as pastiches of pastiche Matisse) running in a Cannes gallery throughout the festival. They're bad, but not as bad as some of the films.

## Bright lights, big pity

When the Bolshoi Ballet first hit America in the late 1950s, tickets were like gold dust. So how come, last year in Las Vegas, they were playing to 6,770 empty seats a night? By Louise Levene

When the Bolshoi Ballet crept out from under the iron curtain to tour the world in the mid-Fifties, the West was totally knocked for six. When they finally hit the United States in 1959, ballet fiends were sleeping rough for days on end outside the Metropolitan Opera House. When the dancers decided to dismiss the official cars and walk from the hotel to the theatre, people threw bouquets as they passed – and well they might. The Bolshoi of the Fifties was a truly awesome assembly of dancers: Galina Ulanova (arguably the greatest ballerina in living memory), Raisa Struchkova, Nicolai Fadeychev and a chorus of unimagined power and beauty. People didn't just go once out of curiosity; they went every night.

But would it play Vegas? The company waited nearly 40 years to find out. At the end of 1996, Ed Martin, a born-again balletomane from Waynoka, Oklahoma, persuaded a group of his neighbours to co-invest in a project to bring Moscow's finest to Las Vegas and Los Angeles. This would-be ballet impresario had enjoyed considerable success bringing Russian ice hockey teams to tour America and his interest in ballet was recent but sincere: "I could watch 30 hockey games back-to-back and never be bored but the Bolshoi mesmerised me."

Martin, formerly a Methodist minister, was bowled over by the *corps de ballet* in *Swan Lake*. "In some ways I felt that I've been in the presence of God," Martin fondly imagined that his enthusiasm would be shared by everybody and that the very word "Bolshoi" was a licence to print money. It wasn't. Ed's tragicomic story is told in the first of Angus Macquieen's two-part documentary series *Dancing for Dollars*, which chronicles the problems faced by Russian ballet after the collapse of Communism. The second film, *The Kirov in Petersburg*, outlines that company's financial and artistic struggles in the context of its glorious heritage. "The Bolshoi in Vegas", shown on Channel 4 tomorrow, is a cautionary tale of corporate greed and individual incompetence, crosscut with archive footage of the successful Fifties tour and sleazy clips of the night-life Las Vegas seem to prefer.

The first lesson Ed Martin had to learn was that ice-hockey players travel considerably lighter than ballet companies. His organisational skills proved unequal to the sheer logistics of transporting 245 dancers, musicians and technical staff with all their equipment. Forty-eight hours before curtain-up, an entire container of gear had yet to materialise. In it were the *Swan Lake* costumes, all the scenery and all the musical instruments. Unknown to Mr Martin it also contained 120 bottles of vodka, 120 bottles of Russian champagne and unthinkable quantities of dried fish (the technical staff were clearly not wasting hard cash on foreign food). US Customs kicked up a fuss but they would hardly have begrudged the scene-shifters a little home cooking had they known what the Bolshoi would find in Nevada.

The Aladdin Theatre had 7000 seats and anyone planning to watch an *entrechat six* from the balcony would need a telescope. Nice wide stage of course but, er, where was Mr Martin planning to put the orchestra? The Bolshoi, whose dollar-crazed management had for some reason approved the venue, were not impressed: "In 25 years this is a first. Where are our instruments? Where is the orchestra pit? Where are the sets?" A US technician was more relaxed and drew a line across his neck: "I'm hired from here down, they're hired from here up. I don't make those decisions." At first glance, this looks like run-



The Bolshoi Ballet, as they were first presented to the West in the 1950s, and as promoted, Las Vegas-style, some 40 years on

of-the-mill, backstage brinkmanship. We all knew it would be all right on the night and, in one sense, it was: the scenery, tutus and dried fish all turn up 90 minutes before curtain-up but there was still one vital element missing: the audience. Ed Martin has sold exactly 44 tickets.

This may have had something to do with Mr Martin's virtual failure to advertise, foolishly imagining he would merely have to hire the hall. After a superhuman PR effort, they managed to swell the first-night house to 230. The low take-up might also be explained by the fact that the front stalls were \$300 each – even the cheap seats were \$85. "We've got a cash crisis," says Martin, finger on the pulse, "and if I don't pay them, the little shits won't perform in L.A." In the end, Martin's liquidated company lost \$1.5m and his investors lost their money. The Bolshoi only ever received their original advance, although they did get their fare home, which was a relief, as Las Vegas's slot machine culture clearly revolted them. "Who are these people?" asks one of the Russians. "Who can sit all day pressing a button? That's a culture? That's degradation."

Culture and degradation are, of course, two things that the Bolshoi know rather a lot about. Since the collapse of its cosily funded life under Communism, the company has been forced on to the streets, turning tricks for hard cash. Unfortunately, individual members of the Bolshoi have felt very much the same way and various break-away groups of dancers, notably Yuri Grigorovich's lamentable Stars of the Bolshoi, have gone to the States on hard-currency raids over the past eight years or so with minimal sets, bitly programmes and low production values. This "bullshit Bolshoi", as Martin neatly describes it,

has devalued the company's stock abroad. The final humiliation of Las Vegas may make it impossible to regain credibility with impresarios.

Victor and Lilian Hochhauser brought the Bolshoi to Britain many times in the Sixties and Seventies and Lilian remembers the glory days with some sadness. "It was wonderful. They had their new production of *Spartacus* during that period at a time when there were stars to dance it but they just don't have the names any more." And whose fault might that be? Step forward Yuri Nikolaevich Grigorovich, artistic director of the Bolshoi from 1964 until power was finally wrested from him in 1995. "He was desperately autocratic and he didn't nurture any new talent. The main problem for the Bolshoi today is the lack of great dancers but even the *corps de ballet* was never in the same class as the Kirov. The rot set in years ago – that terrible season at the Albert Hall in 1993, dire though it was, was a virtual sell-out and the pop promoter Derek Block and his new friend Yuri fondly imagined that the British public's appetite for old rupe was insatiable. Hence their demented plan to charge punters £55 to watch ballet outdoors in the north of England. By the time the whole sorry enterprise was cancelled Block had only managed to shift 8,500 out of 250,000 tickets for his outdoor Bolshoi. He lost over £1m.

Perhaps nobody thought to relay this sad story to Ed Martin and his chums from Waynoka. Mrs Hochhauser certainly has plenty of advice for budding impresarios. "First of all, no one with any idea of the ballet business would put a company into Las Vegas. I mean, we all know that the Bolshoi is not in the best of health at the moment but I can't believe that anyone would succeed in those circumstances – something like *Riverdance* would be fine. He probably thought \$300 a ticket covered him very nicely but there's no way you can get anyone to pay that unless they've got really big names." So is that it? No more Bolshoi in Britain? "I wouldn't like to exclude the possibility of there being any way back for them but it would have to be done extremely carefully, the right price, the right ballets. You have to judge the type of ballet that the public will want to see but always introduce something new. This July the Kirov are introducing *Don Quixote* and Balanchine's *Symphony in C* but *Swan Lake* must come whatever, you always do well with *Swan Lake*. You want to make it interesting but it has to sell well."

Old hands like the Hochhausers know that these days the name on the poster is no longer enough but no one told Ed Martin: "We understood that the word Bolshoi would be enough to sell tickets." He faces financial ruin with the deflated countenance of a man who has just read the small print on his deeds to the Brooklyn Bridge. "I thought it was as sure a thing as you could have. I didn't think it could fail."

*The Bolshoi in Vegas: Channel 4 tomorrow 9pm. The Kirov in Petersburg: Sunday 18 May 9pm. The Kirov Ballet will be performing at the London Coliseum from 9 July to 2 Aug.*

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Puccini

**David Benedict WEEK IN REVIEW**

THE FILM	THE PLAY	THE EXHIBITION
<b>Kolya</b>	<b>Master Class</b>	<b>David Hockney</b>
Jan Sverak's story of a middle-aged Czech cellist (Zdenek Sverak, who also wrote the screenplay) who, on the eve of the 1988 Velvet Revolution, suddenly winds up with a five-year-old Russian-speaking boy (Andrej Chalimon) on his hands.	Leonard Foglia directs Patti LuPone as the great diva Maria Callas in Terrence McNally's bi-play set during a series of master classes. With singers Sophia Wylie, Susan Roper and David Maxwell Anderson and accompanist David Shrubsole.	The first commercial show in years from Britain's most famous living artist consists of boldly coloured paintings of vases of lilies, sunflowers and more exotic blooms (inspired by last year's Vermeer show) plus 24 portraits of himself, his friends and family.
Adam Mars-Jones approved, noting "classically heart-warming elements and scenes [but] the film has more to offer... a pleasingly paradoxical atmosphere." "The more you think about it – and it's hard not to – the weightier <i>Kolya</i> seems, and that makes its apparent slenderness all the more impressive," beamed <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> . "Every rise in temperature is achieved by careful observation of ordinary life, sly comic timing and the gentlest humour," smiled <i>The Times</i> . "The longer the film progresses, the better it becomes, and the natural, unforced acting of Chalimon is a joy," enthused <i>The Guardian</i> . "Both characters charm us near to death, though the director keeps winsomeness at bay with moments of bleak, if not black, comedy," frowned <i>The FT</i> .	Paul Taylor declared, "Not since Dame Edna was hoisted by a hydraulic lift, high above the audience, singing of her painful shyness, has there been a more monumental example of camp disingenuousness." "A sustained exercise in camp, it... made me shake with rage," cried <i>The FT</i> . "Homespun, laughable drivel, masquerading as profundity... Foglia's strident production, full of pent-up caricature," growled the <i>Standard</i> . "Big flashbacks are simply a new-readers-start-here attempt to fill us in," rumbled <i>The Guardian</i> . "The thrilling spectacle of an artist triumphing over her material, willing an audience into submission," sang <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> . "A feat of technique, nervous energy, intelligence and style... a standing ovation-grade performance," trilled <i>The Mail</i> .	Tom Lubbock was deeply disappointed. "Anyone holding out for the good old cause of painting had better take their stand quite a long way away from this." "Hockney stands in this show armed only with the talent in his brush. It isn't quite enough," sighed <i>The Sunday Times</i> . "Sensuous, joyful, but also strangely empty," judged the <i>Express</i> . "The flower paintings teeter on the edge of banality... but the best strike me as among the better things that Hockney has done... He is neither so good as was once thought, nor as bad as now is often said," judged the <i>Telegraph</i> . "Ecstatic still-lives... a militant colourist," announced <i>The Guardian</i> . "Why worry if features don't quite add up? With Hockney, it's on to the next, and the next," murmured <i>The Observer</i> .
Cert 12, 105 mins, Curzon Mayfair (0171-369 1720) and on selected release	At the Queen's Theatre, London W1 (0171-494 5040) to 19 July	At the Annely Juda Gallery, 23 Dering St, London W1 to 19 July
A film of pleasing surprises, thanks to a good script and a tremendous performance from Andrej Chalimon as the boy. A popular, well-deserved winner of the Oscar for Best Foreign Film.	LuPone gives her considerable all but the production is crass, to put it mildly. If you know about Callas, it will annoy you; if you don't, it will mislead you. Makes other dull dramas about art, such as <i>Old Wicked Songs</i> , look good. How many more bio-play star-turns do we have to put up with?	How many of these would stand out from the packed walls of the RA's summer exhibition? In the flowers, the saturated colours do produce a luminosity, but a pointless one. The portraits, framed as a group, coalesce into a blur. Of Hockney, the great draughtsman, there is little sign.

**KEY**

EXCELLENT  
GOOD  
OK  
POOR  
DREAD

مكتبة من الكتب



**THEATRE**  
The Spanish Tragedy,  
Hamlet  
Royal Shakespeare  
Company,  
Stratford-upon-Avon

The shadow play's the  
thing. Or is it?  
Photograph: Geraint Lewis



## Ecstasy of motion

DANCE NDT2 Peacock Theatre, London

There was a man begging outside the Peacock Theatre on Thursday night; he wanted a ticket for NDT2 whose three London dates had completely sold out.

The five works on offer this week were, on the whole, a more satisfying selection than the programme they brought to Sadler's Wells in 1995. The evening opened with Kylian's *Songs of a Wayfarer*, inspired by the Mahler song-cycle. Béjart used this music to represent the journey through life but Kylian chooses instead to chart the passage of human relationships. The choreography is packed with unexpected lifts and supported leaps and it is exquisitely danced. Lucila Alves in the opening *pas de deux* has arms that undulate like a flame, with a speed and a soft brilliance that seem to leave a trace in the air behind her.

The second work is *Solo*, a fizzy six-minute dance by Hans Van Manen for three boys set to Bach's Violin Suite No 1 in D. Van Maeo has fun juxtaposing funky shrugs and struts with more classical virtuosity but, by confining the wit to movements of the body rather than the face, he manages to tickle the audience without vulgarising the light humour. He is helped here by well-judged performances from Vaclav Kunes, Patrick Marin and Fabrice Mazliah.

*Sammanfall*, by former Royal Swedish Ballet soloist Johan Lager, is a piece for seven dancers and occurs on a set dominated by a large greco-eyeball which plays pee-po through a hole in the corner of the backcloth. This is obviously supposed to Mean Something. The programme oozes says something about a sense of

isolation, and interval gossip suggests it's something about a broken relationship lived out in the public gaze, but all it really means is that the audience giggles quite a bit each time the eye rolls comically from side to side. Duets and trios flow into one another in dances that are constructed like an elaborate game in which each movement must slot into the next without hesitation or deviation. Repetition is allowed.

Hans Van Manen takes the helm for the penultimate piece, a moving and inventive duet for Shirley Esseboom and Vaclav Kunes. The finale is *Skew Whiff* by the British NDT dancer Paul Lightfoot, in which three men and four women in an ill-advised shade of German mustard leap, twitch and do silly walks to Rossini's overture to *The Thieving Magpie*, brought to life by dancers who dash off double tours en l'air almost faster than the eye can catch.

Although a few "older" dancers have hee-o kept on until a place becomes vacant for them in the main outfit, the bulk of NDT2's dancers are between 17 and 22 years old. This means that everything the company does is characterised by the gorgeous mercurial fluency of young bodies in an ecstasy of motion who lead the choreography a fresh and radiant it doesn't always possess.

It is this, oot the material, that makes people beg for tickets. *Tonight at Peacock Theatre, London WC2 (0171-314 3800); Mon-Wed, Theatre Royal Brighton (01273 323488); then touring to Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Canterbury, Sheffield, High Wycombe and Blackpool*

Louise Levene

# More matter, less art

'The Spanish Tragedy' is supposed to be an inferior precursor to 'Hamlet'. But, juxtaposed at Stratford, Kyd out-performs the Bard. By Paul Taylor

Often cited as an important precursor of *Hamlet* in histories of drama, Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* all too rarely crops up on the stage. We should be grateful to the RSC, then, for making it possible, this season, to see these two revenge dramas side-by-side. You'd think that Kyd's play would be at an overwhelming disadvantage in such a pairing exercise. Shakespeare's handling of the features they share – the vengeance-seeking ghost, the isolated, temporising hero who needs to verify the information he's given; the mad, real and feigned; the use of a play-within-a-play to further the revenge scheme – is far subtler and more penetrating. Kyd, who it's thought also wrote the lost, so-called *ur-Hamlet*, the principle source of its later oomph, is more journeyman than genius.

Yet Michael Boyd's powerful, provocative, sometimes tricky production of *The Spanish Tragedy* in The Swan convinces you that this is a work of strong imaginative integrity which deserves to be seen in its own right. Bringing home the acute difficulty of achieving redress through the proper channels, the play focuses on the painfully ironic case of Hieronimo (Peter Wight), the upright magistrate who has to take the law into his own bloody hands against his son's murderers, protected because of their high birth and their exploitation of Hieronimo's increasingly crazed public behaviour.

It's the play's creepy achievement to show all the action from the perspective of eternity. The characters think they are acting on their own behalf; in fact, we can see that they are being used by the gods to fulfil a design of which they are unconscious. *The Spanish Tragedy* begins with the ghost of Don Andrea (Patrice Nalambana) who has been allowed to return

from the underworld, to the company of Revenge, in order to see how his former mistress Bel-imperia (Siobhan Redmond) will avenge his murder. Here Revenge, a hooded, spectral-voiced figure who paces around the theatre, has to prompt Don Andrea, with some impatience, during his opening speeches, as though this trainee Senecan ghost were not quick enough on the uptake for him.

In Boyd's staging, the ghost does not simply sit through the play as a choric spectator but enters into a much more dynamic relationship with the unfolding action, prowling round and through it as an unpalatable but unsettling presence. Not understanding that all the apparent setbacks – eg the slaughtering of his best friend, Horatio (a wonderfully dignified Tristan Sturrock) – are, in fact, necessary stages towards the completion of his revenge, he throws fits of violent, scenery-endangering frustration.

With a bower where the trees are planks dangling like corpses from meat-hooks and a curtailed inner-stage where the characters sit in a row like actors waiting in some purgatorial ante-room to be assigned a part, Tom Piper's design heightens the sense of a world moving to a pre-ordained end. The performances are, for the most part, fine. Peter Wight offers an intriguing portrait of Hieronimo as a tubby, ineffectual nervous wreck. If it makes you wonder what the state of his court can have been like before the strain of the bereavement began to turn his wits, this approach also brings a surprising degree of naturalness and humanity to a role where rhetoric can rule.

The production goes too far at points. At the close, Boyd suggests that the whole nightmare is about to be replayed, this

time, with Horatio as Revenge. This idea of endless brutal recycling causes an undeniable shudder, but it's in contradiction of the play Kyd had wrote. Even at its most questionable, the production never left me cold, though, which I'm afraid is what happened during long stretches of Matthew Warchus's main-stage account of *Hamlet*, starring a likeable but unsearching Alex Jennings.

As an antidote to Kenneth Branagh's dire, interminably inclusive movie, the production may win friends, though the cuts and restructurings here do not, I feel, result in an overall dramatic gain. Skipping the opening scene on the battlements, the production begins with Jennings tipping out a jar of ashes while, projected behind him, there's a sentimental black-and-white movie footage of *Hamlet* as a little boy playing with his father and some dogs. In voice-over, we hear Claudius delivering a public speech, the walls then split open and we are at a loud palace party where, in continuous action and often not very probably, much of the early business of the play takes place.

Warchus has cut Fortinbras and that whole political aspect of the piece, so, at the end, it's back to that home-movie footage, with Horatio in voice-over, describing the events of the drama: "... carnal, bloody and unnatural acts, / Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters" etc. When this speech is delivered to Fortinbras, it becomes a comment on the limited perception of *Hamlet*'s rival – all he'd be able to understand about the profound experience just undergone. Recited to nobody, as here, it seems – like the production – to be a case of the play selling itself short.

*'Hamlet', RSC Stratford in rep; 'The Spanish Tragedy', RSC Swan in rep. Booking: 01789 295623*

## An evening of Mutter magic

When Piers Hellawell showed us "Ways through Bracken" on Wednesday night, at the Barbican, we could virtually feel peat underfoot, sense clouds scatter on the heels of a breeze. It was the first section of *Do Not Disturb*, an LSO commission where Thomas A Clark's haiku-like poetry was tossed in youthful antiphony between sections of the Finchley Children's Music Group. Sir Colin Davis conducted and the performance certainly conveyed feelings of "mountain landscape" and "the privacy of solitude" (I quote the composer's own notes). Hellawell's spacious orchestral canvas conjures illusions of depth and height, with the excitable pecking of wood-blocks, an off-stage trumpet, strings veering off in all directions and a pulsing harmonic pungency redolent of Martinu, Britten, even Steve Reich. Orchestral textures shimmer with startling

**CLASSICAL** Do Not Disturb  
Barbican Hall, London

surreality (Berg's ghost hovers somewhere among the opening measures) and the overall effect is of a rugged woodland tailor-made for the jaded victims of city life. I loved it.

*Do Not Disturb* was preceded by a yawningly legato account of the National Anthem (just one verse), given in honour of the Royal guest, His Royal Highness Prince Andrew. Thereafter, once released from Hellawell's action-packed private world, Davis and the orchestra were joined by a chic Anne-Sophie Mutter for a luxuriant saunter through Beethoven's Violin Concerto.

Davis set the scene with a genial, plainly phrased opening tutti (the rising woodwind motive was subtly accelerated) before Mutter took over with a sugar-coated tone, immaculate trills, well-oiled slides and a seamless delivery of the solo

line. She played as she looked, regally, glamorously and with an almost intimidating sophistication. Davis provided a velvety backdrop, but when it came to Fritz Kreisler's inspiring rational cadenza, Mutter cast off her glad rags (metaphorically, of course) to embark on one of the most daring and original re-creations I've ever heard.

That miraculous passage where the first movement's two principal themes converge – each taking its turn to dominate – was vividly differentiated, and when the cadenza drew to a close and the "main tune" sat waiting in the wings, Mutter coaxed a dark, trance-like tone for its return. She achieved parallel wonders in the *Larghetto*, veiling her sound perceptibly for the song-like central section, then welling with emotion for the return of the first idea. The finale was refreshingly brisk, the second cadenza full of fun and the overall effect, a humbling jour-

ney from lofty aloofness to compelling spontaneity.

The concert concluded with a broadly stated account of Brahms's Fourth Symphony. Davis launched into the opening motive without fuss or exaggeration, but came the first big string tune (about a minute and a half in and marked merely *forte*), and he indulged the sort of lavish rubato that characterised the rest of the performance. The *Andante* featured some lustrous string-playing, the heavyweight Scherzo impressive horns and the finale, a comprehensive grasp of musical structure; but, for me, Davis's lingering and languishing spilled into overkill. It was a heartfelt production, no doubt about that, but too well-padded for a symphony that ends in catastrophe.

*Do Not Disturb* repeated 21, 22 May. Booking: 0171-638 8891

Rob Cowan

## Twangs for the memory

**POP** Hank Marvin  
Fairfield Halls, Croydon

When Hank Marvin produces sounds from his red electric guitar he has a look of pleasant surprise on his face as if he's overheard the tune before. Out of the matching red amplifiers come the celestial opening notes of "Wonderful Land" and Hank smiles at the audience with mild astonishment. Is that really me playing that?

A tom-tom drum thuds in the distance and he suddenly finds himself playing "Apache". He's been performing this one for 37 years, yet he can still make it seem like a new composition. The master of the Stratocaster was back in Croydon, still guarding the secret of how he makes those ooises so pure and beautiful. When Hank Marvin played "Atlantis" it really did sound like he was at the bottom of the ocean. "Man of Mystery" still sent shivers up the spine.

Here was a man playing the electric guitar as though it had just been invented. He only gave us one clue about how he did it. "This one's got harder strings," he explained during a guitar change. "I'm trying to build up my shoulder muscles." There were lots of jokes like that. Jokes about Croydon. Jokes about Cliff. ("Emily Broote had such foresight.") Hank Marvin was once asked by Buddy Holly's father for Cliff Richard's autograph. Not sure if this one was a joke or not, but it was a good introduction to his set of Holly covers.

"That'll be the Day", "Ob Boy" and "It Doesn't Matter Any More" were the latest songs to get the Hank Marvin Treatment, which is a sort of honours list for pop music. In this category we also got "Cavatina" and "Don't Cry for Me Argentina", but it wasn't all guitar instrumentals. Hank and his backing band were pretty good at the vocal harmonies too, and they knocked out a fine country version of Elvis Presley's "Mystery Train".

What people liked best, though, were The Shadows' hits, and he gave us these from time to time all the way through the show. Hank Marvin only had to launch into "Finger Bunt" and we were whisked back to another era. Suddenly, it was the early Sixties, when men could impress women merely by kick-starting their motorcycles, hank robbers made their getaways in Commer vans, and brave Russians and Americans hurtled through space in capsules the size of a garden shed.

Hank Marvin was only 19 when he recorded "Apache". You can work out for yourself

how old he must be now, but he's still rockin' like a teenager. Even his red guitar looks brand new.

Magnus Mills



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# Spoilt, slothful sprinter

John Walsh celebrates the idle idol who entranced two generations

Cyril Connolly: a life by Jeremy Lewis, Cape, £25

I do not like that smarty-boots Connolly," Virginia Woolf used to say. The most sophisticated socio-literary analyst of her day later confided in her Diary the awfulness of having to dine with "baboon Connolly and his gollywog slut wife". Jeremy Lewis's sparkling biography is full of such judgments, and of peevish testimonies to his subject's social shortcomings. "Cyril is not perhaps the ideal guest," wrote Harold Nicolson to Vita Sackville-West. "He is terribly untidy in an irritating way. He leaves dirty handkerchiefs in the chairs and fountain pens (my fountain pens) open in books. Moreover it is rather a bore having a person who has nothing of his own - not a cigarette or a stamp..."

What he did have only served to irritate people further - his greed, his sulkiness, his conceit, his endless mick-taking, his pet lemons, his ingratitude for favours, his pretentiousness, his lechery, his occasional larceny (he once filched three avocado pears from Somerset Maugham's garden at Cap Ferrat), his political naivety. All these unlovely traits, minutely charted by victims and ex-friends, are now faithfully verified by Jeremy Lewis, until one is forced to ask, with Anthony Powell, "What, in short, was the point of Connolly? Why did people put up with moroseness, gloom, open hostility? ... He was one of those individuals ... who seem to have been sent into the world to be talked about."

Or written about. This is the second major biography of the great critic to be published in two years, following Clive Fisher's *Cyril Connolly: A Nostalgic Life* in 1995, which itself followed Michael Shelden's *Friends of Promise*, a lively account of the *Horizon* years, and David Pryce-Jones's *Memoir* that accompanied the publication of Connolly's *War Journal*.

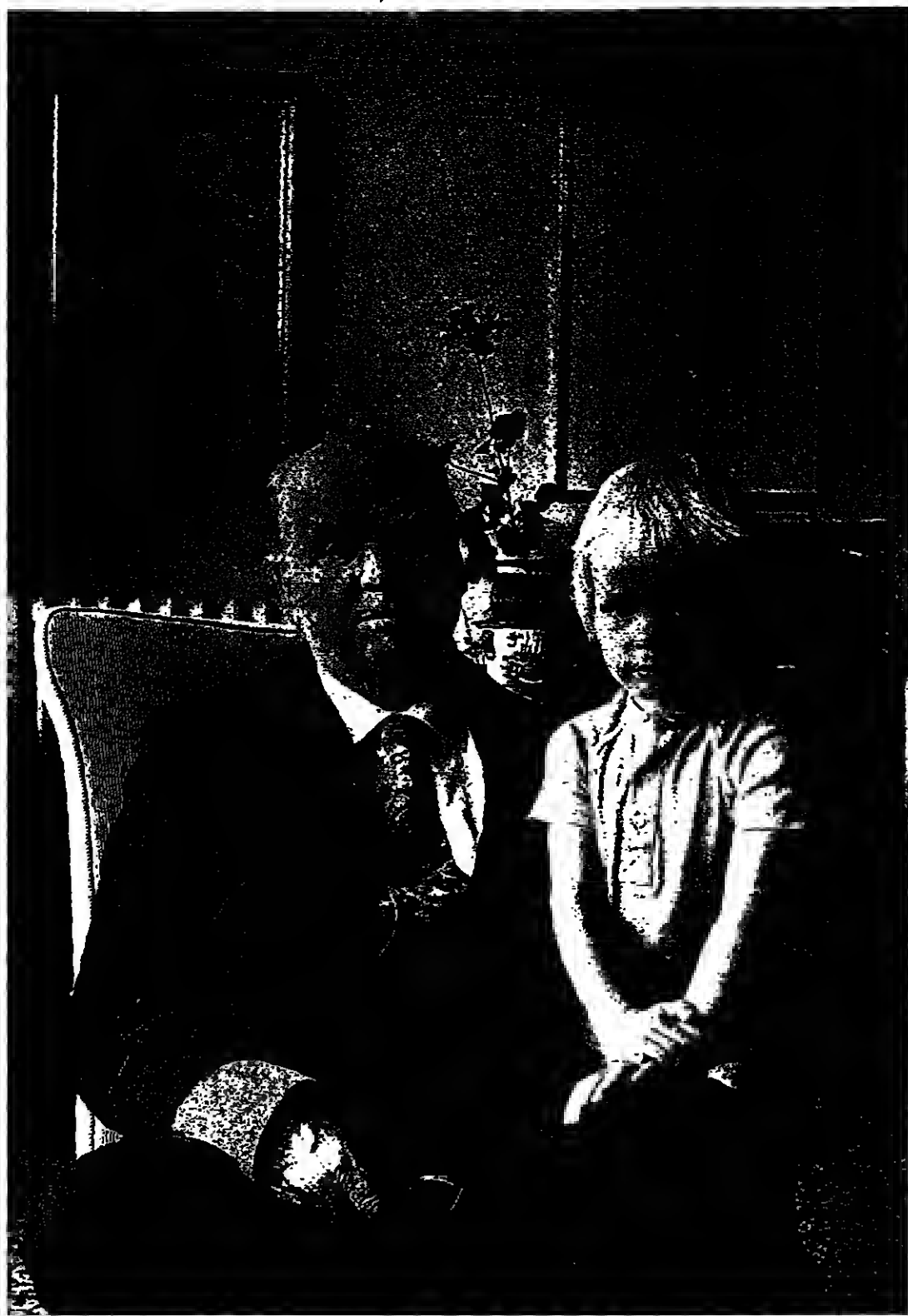
The new volume is the first to have been written with the blessing of Cyril's widow, Deirdre, who rejected all previous overtures from prospective life-writers and

refused to release her husband's voluminous correspondence, diaries and self-pitying *belles-lettres*.

But what is the point of Connolly? There has been no convincing reassessment of his stature as a writer - at least not enough to justify reprinting the essays in *Condemned Playgrounds* or *Ideas and Places* or *The Evening Colonnade* or his only novel *The Rock Pool*. His study of literary style and literary frustration, *Enemies of Promise*, remains in print, but not that smug, hedonist's companion, *The Unquiet Grave*. Jeremy Lewis does not make fancy claims for Connolly's "greatness". He calls him "a literary terms ... a sprinter rather than a marathon runner" and "a minimalist of the human heart", whose genius lay in the sparks and shards that flew off from his journalism, a writer in a constant state of almost-brilliance, subverted by a thousand retarding influences, from war and women to jealousy and ennui.

What is important about him, however, when all the explanations about failure and writer's block have ceased, is a life that spans and sometimes embodies 20th-century literature. Connolly was at the snobbish St Cyprian's school with Beaton and Orwell; at Eton, he turned from being a grubby, ink-stained, miserable weed to a lowly romantic and precociously melancholic ironist, falling in love with Noel Blakiston and Bobby Longden and the waxed silk hats of the "Pop" elite. At Oxford, by comparison, he mostly travelled in pursuit of a new horizon to compensate for the paradise he'd left behind. His literary apprenticeship was as secretary and factotum to Logan Pearsall Smith, the fussy American epigrammatist who used to laugh aloud at the mere thought of Cyril's letters and hankered his debts and travels with fond, if ill-advised indulgence.

Connolly spent most of his 20s and 30s in a head-spinning round of travels across the Mediterranean, of lunches, spongings, seductions and hotels, renting apartments from Bejeman or



The result of the pram in the hall: Connolly with his son, Matthew

Jehh, travelling with Longden or Quennell, encountering Christopher Sykes or Bob Boothby en route to stay with Lees-Milne or Nicolson ... the names recur and intertwine like motifs in a German opera. What ails the tedium is the gradual, Kraken-like rising to the surface of Connolly's heterosexual satirism. Self-confessedly "emotionally homosexual" until then, he investigated the stews of Limehouse and Whitechapel and, more decorously, fell in love with Racy Fisher, daughter of Admiral William Fisher, who refused to let her near him. Then he met Jean Bakewell in Paris (introduced by the mother of her lesbian lover) and a new Connolly emerged - dedicated to lotus-eating excess, to luxury food, drink and cigars, to living for pleasure at other people's expense, for dispersing his talent in journalism, talk, sex and soft fruit.

As the century rolls by, Connolly's life falls into an entertaining and predictable succession of hulloing and/or grief-stricken encounters with women, little snatches of exquisitely judged descriptions of places and people, an ever-more *ex-cathedra* tone to his critical writings and much self-exculpation examination of his conscience. Some of this makes for revealing reading, such as his itemised criticisms of his girlfriend Diana, demanding *inter alia* that "when being unfaithful, go outside your spouse's circle of friends" ("Why should I? You don't" was her marginal reply). The three-hand affair with Barbara Skelton and George Weidenfeld is played for laughs but the mood darkens in the closing chapters, as Connolly's self-pity turns alternately rancid and infantile.

What makes this biography special is Jeremy Lewis's stylish and funny narrative. Fans of Lewis's memoirs and biography reviews will know of his fascination for the revealing *ad hominem* detail, and this book is crammed with them: Connolly's father spending afternoons at the Windmill Theatre "appraising and re-appraising the same row of nearly naked chorus girls"; the "disconcerting habit inherited from Bloomsbury" by both Pearsall Smith and Desmond

McCarthy "of putting the telephone down at the end of a conversation without saying 'goodbye'". And Lewis supplements an already anecdote-crammed narrative with the most entertaining footnotes seen in hard covers since *The Third Policeman*. He clearly admires Connolly's writing, editing skill, broad human sympathies and frequent kindnesses. If he cannot help portraying him as something of a monster - or as the vexed, spoilt and capricious baby which he most often resembled - he does so with an indulgent chuckle. The result is a study of the literary spirit and the literary century which is unflaggingly entertaining, evokes a lost world of grand houses and unemployable geniuses, and gives you Connolly,warts, lemons, avocados, debts, absurdities and all. By the end, despite all the snippings from Virginia Woolf and the rest of the anti-Connolly club, you feel you understand why Philip Larkin should have said, on being asked if he'd like to meet him, "It was like being asked if you wanted to meet Matthew Arnold."

# On his best behaviour

D J Taylor visits The Chantry, again

Journals, 1990-1992 by Anthony Powell, Heinemann, £20

I used to be said that there were two ways of achieving lasting literary celebrity in England. One was to die young and tragically leaving tantalising shards of promise; the other was to live to a gargantuan old age having written a shelf of books to be rediscovered in one's dotage.

Judging by the violently mixed reaction to his recent work - two volumes of assorted reviews and the first two instalments of these journals - Anthony Powell is rapidly disproving the second strand of this adage. Worse, critical sniping at late-period trifles has started to encroach on his greatest achievement, the soon-to-be-televised 12-volume novel sequence *A Dance To The Music Of Time*. Praised to the skies on completion in 1975, it is now found to be snobbish, recalcitrant and a threnody for a dead world.

Writers have their ups and downs, and Powell can take comfort from the example of Anthony Trollope, whose reputation has undergone a bewildering switchback ride over the past 100 years. At the same time it cannot be gratifying to learn, at the ripe age of 91, that the masterpieces of one's maturity are now seen in some quarters as impenetrable exercises in obscurantism. You sympathise all the more in that so much criticism of Powell's work is fundamentally non-literary, if not simply obtuse.

Turning over the *Journals* and noting their mania for lineage, connection and social correctness, many a reviewer diagnosed simple snobbery. One might retort that if a writer whose work grows out of social codes and distinctions can't take an interest in this kind of apparatus, then what can he take an interest in?

Doubtless many of these strictures will be pushed to the surface again by *Journals 1990-1992*, another hefty report on late-period life at The Chantry (Nr Frome, Somerset), the Powells' West Country hideaway. Outwardly not much has changed since the earlier volumes. Friends come to lunch; the Powells' hospitality is returned.

Other friends die ("XYZ obit" is a familiar entry). The cat depopulates the local fauna, and Lady Violet nips up to London for a Pakenham clambake leaving AP to brood over Shakespeare in the study and indulge in one of his favourite parlour games - suggest-

ing improvements to great works of world literature.

It's a critical commonplace to talk of Powell's habitual reserve. The near-simultaneous deaths (recorded in volume two) of his cat Trelawney and an old friend who was the joint dedicatee of a novel are worth considering in this respect, as most of the emotion looks to be lavished on the cat. For all this, it seems clear that as he sinks deeper into old age Powell has ceased to care about giving offence.

The polite balancing acts of his memoirs dissolve into wounding judgments of contemporaries (Harold Acton: "an unfortunate influence on the Oxford of his generation"; Evelyn Waugh: "interesting how little people know themselves"; Henry Green: "really rather a shit"). The only surprise is the elaborate smokescreen raised above the famous row with Auberon Waugh in 1990 (Waugh *filed* had liberally besmirched Powell's reputation in a paper for which Powell reviews), adumbrated only

in an innocuous remark about "having resigned from the *Telegraph*".

Elsewhere the tone settles itself into the kind of specialised, old-world crossness of which Powell is perhaps our greatest living exponent, a litany of reproach that takes in everything from feeble books to journalists who presume to

address him by his Christian name and unpunctual photographers, the *Independent's* own Herbie Knott included.

Much of what follows is irresistibly funny - a telephone call from Lord Denning, who "wafted waves of genial egotism down the line in accents of a stage peasant", or a televised sighting of John Major, described as "tall, good figure, dignified movement, distinctly aristocratic one would have thought".

By the end, powers waning in the wake of a serious operation, the consolations of old age seem less tangible. "I sit or lie with a rug round me like a character in the background of a Russian novel, the old prince."

All this comes interspersed with the usual wistful glances into the lost world of youth. A visitor in the previous volume of journals was described as "tall, thin, rather little-girl voice that made her seem like girls in the past one used to know, not of today". Powell might not be "of today" himself, but that doesn't make his life any less

deceitful, or his achievement any less important.

Monday  
Tuesday  
Wednesday  
Thursday  
Friday  
Saturday  
Sunday

A week in books

When a Fabergé show packed the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1977, its director Roy Strong noted "the three ingredients essential to any successful exhibition: death, sex and jewels". In his *Diaries 1967-1987* (Weidenfeld, £20), the first Curator Superstar makes an epic exhibition of himself - but only scores on two counts. Jewels, he's got 'em. Duchesses and divas flash their rocks as Sir Roy minutes post-soirées - frock by frock, tiana by tiana - with the faical relish learnt from his old mentor, Cecil Beaton. As for death, one arts worthy after another bows out as the "self-made grammar-school boy from nowhere" (ie a loveless home in Edmonton) buries friend and foe. Sex, however, stalks mostly in the wings - except when Princess Margaret and Roddy Llewellyn Lurch into view.

The papers have already gutted this vain and carry tome for its royal gossip. So the trashing of Di ("Eliza Doolittle at the Embassy hall") to the slighting of Fergie ("no beauty at all, but good Sloane Street features with large eyes"). Elsewhere, Labour politicians who dare to remind the caped civil servant just who pays for his fab gear appear as "north-country louts" or ignorant numbskulls. So this top-flight bitch would do well to mind his own Ps and Qs. No works exist by a painter named



Boyd Tonkin

"Lucien" Freud. The soloist in *Swan Lake* does not dance unaccompanied "fouettes". And "embroiderie anglaise" has got tangled up mid-Channel.

Name-dropping and point-scoring at full tilt, the *Diaries* drag Max Beerbohm chatter into the age of David Frost. Yet for all his snooty foibles, Sir Roy's flair as a scholar-showman appealed to a much broader public than his detractors ever could. Strong stuck firmly to a public-service ethic and a mission to explain. He never ran an "ace card". When Sir Terence Conran and his business bullies took charge as the 1980s V&A went "up the Thatcherite alley", Strong cared even less for them than for union jobsworths.

As a first-class primer on arts-world skullduggery, the *Diaries* deserve a permanent home on Chris Smith's new desk at National Heritage. Underneath the sniping and griping, they recount a 20-year battle to bring style and splendour to state culture without mimicking market forces. Strong sought to paint his corner of the public sector gold instead of grey. And that quixotic ideal looks just as valid now as when the man in "the Regency jacket and the ruffled shirt stepped into the media limelight" of Harold Wilson's high noon.

# Looking for a message in the bottle

John Harvey investigates the sad life of crime fiction's greatest stylist

Raymond Chandler: a biography by Tom Hiney, Chatto, £16.99

Lean back in your seat on the 24 bus, ask your fellow passengers to name three writers of detective fiction, and chances are Raymond Chandler will be among them. Talk shop with a bunch of crime writers and the same name comes up as someone to admire and enjoy, even steal from now and then. For a man who scarcely set pen to paper seriously until he was in his fifties and who completed only seven novels, Chandler's reputation is enviable and extraordinary. And deserved?

Tom Hiney's biography does what any literary biography should do. It sends you back to the work. Re-reading *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Goodbye*, especially, there seems little doubt that with these two books Chandler came close to perfection within his chosen form - a case in the life of an urban private eye.

Born in Chicago in 1888, Chandler moved with his mother to England and was educated at Dulwich College. He served with the Gordon Highlanders during the First World War and, re-settled in the US and became a successful Los Angeles oil executive into his mid-forties. Out of work and attracted by the idea of earning his living as a writer, he signed up for an evening class - "Short Story Writing 52AB" - and began selling fiction to *Black Mask* magazine. His first novel, *The Big Sleep*, was published in 1939.

Chandler built on the hard-hitting fiction of Dashiell Hammett and James M Cain, which merged social realism and the quick-fire sex and violence of pulp magazines. It married

pin-point observation and smart-alec humour with a self-conscious use of rhythmic sentence structure and elaborate metaphor. What he added was a degree of sentimentality which Hiney shows us was totally in accord with Chandler's character. And in Philip Marlowe, his LA detective, those contradictory elements of toughness and a finer sensibility are held nicely in balance.

In spite of Chandler's reputation, it is probably through Humphrey Bogart's portrayal in *Hawks The Big Sleep* that we know Marlowe best. As the current *Murder Ink* season at the National Film Theatre shows, Chandler was a key figure in crime cinema as source and screenwriter. As Hiney makes clear, the screenplay he co-wrote with Billy Wilder for *Double Indemnity* was the one which broke the over-censorious grip of the Hollywood Production Code.

To Chandler's mind, Bogart was a near-perfect embodiment of his hero, not least through his understanding of what it was to get through the day on a bottle of bourbon and precious little solid food. Like creation, like creator, as Hiney shows: the central fact of Chandler's life was his drinking.

The alcoholic son of an alcoholic father, he followed all too earnestly down that genetic path although, unlike his father, he stuck fast to his mother rather than desert her. In fact, he did it twice. Having taken responsibility for his natural mother, sick with cancer, and supported her from his early twenties until her death some dozen years later, he promptly married Cissy, a woman 20 years his



Raymond Chandler: getting through the day on a bottle of bourbon and precious little solid food

senior. In turn, he nursed her through a slow decline until her death aged 84. There is a uneasy sense of Chandler's sexuality that slides between the lines of Hiney's book without being precisely pinned down. We learn that he had two brief affairs during his marriage, but discover little of them or the women concerned. His preference was to worship at a distance, as if over-fastidious of the act itself. There are frequent instances of him condemning his contemporaries for what he saw as the sexual excesses of their novels. When, in Chandler's work, Marlowe

encounters unbridled female sexuality, his reaction takes misogyny to the point of hysteria. In life, it was only after Cissy's death, and shielded by his own impotence, that he took on the role of would-be seducer.

Indeed, one of Hiney's biggest problems here is that Chandler's life is only extraordinary in its comparative dullness. For much of the time he shunned company, preferring to write copious letters - acute, funny and thankfully liberally used here. Only towards the end did he emerge into a needy gregariousness, but by then he was boorish and pathetic, the

sort of drunk you hope will pass you by.

Hiney fleshes out the latter years more fully than Frank McShane's 1976 biography, and his portrait of a suicidal individual in need of, and receiving, psychiatric care is acute. But his tendency to blur the distinction between Chandler himself and his fictional voice is ingenious. Commenting, for instance, on his claim that by the 1920s Chandler was fighting shy of sensible decisions, Hiney quotes a lively passage denouncing the virtues of common sense. Something from a letter? Only by turning to the back of the book do we find this is not Chandler's voice, nor even fiction written at the time, but an extract from the 1957 *Playback*.

What we learn of Chandler's methodology is interesting - the separate notebooks in which he noted one-liners, slang expressions, names of potential characters, clothes; his use of small sheets of paper, each holding no more than 15 lines, forcing him to find "a bit of magic" for each page. And it is fascinating to read his description of the fighting in the First World War trenches, written 20 years before his first novel: "On the firing step the Number One of the gun crew was standing to with half of his body silhouetted above the parapet, motionless against the glare of the light except that his hand was playing scales on the butt of his gun."

In the specificity and the surprise of that final image, the genesis of Chandler's later style is to be found. Just as it is in the best of the fiction that we find his glory - and any biography can only hope to footnote that.

هكذا من الاصل



Can European travellers bring something new out of Africa? Patrick Wright looks for the colonial roots of genocide while (below) Duncan Fallowell tracks a vanishing poet

## Apocalypse here and now

S ometime after oightfall, the author steps off a bus in the very deadest stretch of the Algerian Sahara. Red sand drifts around him as he stands at the roadside with a suitcase and a word processor. Seeing the flickering light of a fire, he walks nervously towards it. In his mind he is counting up the terrible wounds inflicted on Alexander Gordon Laing, a Scottish explorer who was assaulted and robbed near here in 1825.

But he finds a group of men who are content to direct him back past the bus stop to the town's single hotel, a dismal establishment where this distinguished Swedish writer sits and wonders "OK, perhaps one has to travel. But why exactly here?"

Sven Lindqvist's opening question may prompt some readers to wonder why so many writers feel obliged to travel at all. The pith helmet is in the museum along with the Gatling gun, but publishers are still commissioning marathons of the white-legs-in-the-jungle variety. And nobody needs another book in which travel is served up as the distance you go before fatuous western attitudes become entertaining.

Lindqvist is quite different. He heads into the desert with an ancient word processor so heavy that he needs a native with a wheelbarrow to cart it from one sand-blasted hotel to the next. Presenting himself as a resolutely unheroic figure, he draws on many visits to Africa over decades. As for the 100 floppy disks in his bag, they contain what he takes to be "the core of European thought", excavated over countless days in the libraries of Europe.

His title is quoted from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, a novella written in the last years of the 19th century, which tells of a voyage upriver into the African continent in search of Kurtz, who has vanished into the savagery of colonialism.

Lindqvist first read this book as a young man just after the Second World War, when it

'Exterminate all the Brutes' by Sven Lindqvist, Granta, £8.99

appeared to foreshadow the Nazi holocaust. The connection between 19th-century imperialism and 20th-century fascism remains his preoccupation as he travels through the parched emptiness of the desert: noting tiny incidents on the sites of past atrocities; collecting the vivid dreams that still disturb the passing European; and pressing them between his pages, rather as if they were exotic desert flowers.

Conrad's story was written at the height of British imperialism, and Lindqvist establishes it as a thoroughgoing condemnation of colonial violence. He traces Conrad's interest in the imperial expeditions of that time: Stanley's triumphant return in 1889 from a three-year expedition, actually a farcical and disastrous affair, to rescue Emin Pasha from "dervishes" in Sudan. He reviews the necessary technological innovations from Mr Dunlop's invention of the bicycle inner tube, which helped to trigger demand for rubber, to the weapons that made safe slaughter possible - gunboats, rifles and the "dum-dum" bullets used for stopping "savages" but banned from European wars.

Some elements of Conrad's story were lifted straight from outrageous reality. There really was a man, Captain Rom, who decorated the gardens of his house at Stanley Falls with the severed heads of 21 Africans killed during a punitive mission. But others are more philosophical, like the idea of extinction, which Lindqvist traces back to Cuvier, who pointed in the 18th century to the extinction of prehistoric animals. This was elaborated in 1850 by Robert Knox, a race theorist who turned extermination into a fact of nature, arguing that "the dark races" were incapable of becoming civilised, and must instead "go under" to the Saxons.

Charles Darwin loathed the brutality he saw on his travels, including the systematic extermination of Indians in the Argentine. But the great evolutionist still foresaw a time when the "savage races" would be exterminated by their civilised superiors. From then on, "it became accepted to shrug your shoulders at genocide".

Having exposed the ideas that justified European imperialism, and the extinction of native peoples, Lindqvist argues that the Nazi holocaust had its roots in 19th-century European thought. Hitler grew up with the belief that imperialism was "biologically necessary", and entailed the "destruction of the lower races". He was convinced of the need for "living space".

The "Lebensraum" idea was first promoted by the German zoologist and geographer Friedrich Ratzel, who in 1891 insisted that races of "inferior culture" died out because Europeans destroyed them in order to take their land. Ratzel turned territorial expansion into

the primary sign of a race's vitality. He also pressed for the creation of a German empire. But it was not until 1904 that Germany got round to exterminating the Herero of South West Africa, and there was little distant Lebensraum left to conquer. So the logic of extermination was brought home to Europe. Ratzel included Jews and gypsies with aboriginal people on the list of "inferior" races, fit only to be displaced. He also saw that the struggle for living space did not always have to take place far from Europe. Hitler was given a copy of Ratzel's work in 1924 when he was in prison writing *Mein Kampf*, in which he imagined Britain and Germany dividing up the world, with Germany expanding eastward.

Such is Lindqvist's main argument, but it would be quite wrong to suggest that he has written a mere tract about ideas. The book is presented as a sequence of 169 short and beautifully written passages in which his story is mixed with autobiographical reflection. In one section the brutality of colonialism may be traced through contemporary documents, while in the next it may be dreamed or distantly implied in Lindqvist's recollections of being beaten as a child - something that Swedish parents were allowed to do "right up until 1966".

These subjective episodes are not always entirely successful, and editors have tried to persuade Lindqvist to reduce them. Since this book was actually written as the third volume in a trilogy, these passages would be more resonant for readers familiar with the first two (which are not available in English). But Lindqvist has kept this more personal material for good reasons. It allows him to avoid the omniscient, and incipiently imperialist, "I" of conventional travel-writing. It also enables him to suggest that something of imperialism lives on close to the foundation of European self-understanding - fuelling the fascism of Le Pen or the racists who attack immigrant hostels in Germany, Sweden and elsewhere.

A few academics may mutter that this is not a proper history book, and deplore the absence of this year's mandatory theorists from its footnotes. But Lindqvist deserves far better than that. He has written an engaged and engaging book that the general reader can think along with. Were the universities ever to tire of their clotted labyrinths of "theory", they would hail it as exemplary for its lucidity. As for travel, with Lindqvist it has absolutely nothing to do with bouncing impressions off a world you can't be bothered to understand. Instead, it is a way of getting to the root of things, of sticking with intractable realities long after others have moved on, of seeing the picture frame as well as the black man who, at an opportune moment, happens to be carrying it through the dusty square outside the hotel window.

Independent choice:

American crime writing

by Nick Kimberley

F or decades American writers have been the most adept at exploiting crime fiction in all its forms, but the evidence here suggests that those forms have become so encrusted with decorative excesses that they no longer function. Some might take as proof of that malfunction a collection of essays such as *Criminal Proceedings: the contemporary American crime novel*, edited by Peter Messent (Pluto, £13.99). It's not that popular literature is beneath critical rigour, but does rigour need to have such a dead hand?

Or perhaps the cultural-studies essay itself is generic, bound by rules none may break. One such is that your title must come in two sections: first the punchline; then the apologetic explanation. You know the form: "Law Crimes: The Legal Fictions of John Grisham and Scott Turow"; "Policing the Margins: Barbara Wilson's *Gaudi Afternoon* and *Troubles in Transylvania*", and so on.

In his introduction, Messent suggests that the private eye novel no longer works as "far as the representation of criminal activity and its containment goes". I'd say that, even for Chandler, "containment" was not on the agenda; but too many recent US crime novels seem content with the familiar comforts of the first person "I" of the private eye. What has changed is the form that eye takes: "he" may be a she, and she may be a skip tracer. So it is with Janet Evanovich's *Three to Get Deadly* (Hamish Hamilton, £13.99). Stephanie Plum calls herself a "bounty hunter" but is otherwise a traditional private eye, working outside the system to bring justice to the downtrodden. No problem there, but Evanovich sees the private eye as a lifestyle option. What matters is that Plum drives the wrong (read: right) kind of car, eats the wrong (read: right) kind of food, lives in the wrong (read: right) town and is

the wrong (read: right) gender. Such tiny inversions change nothing. Plum is a standard-issue saint with a gun, though not as outmoded as the detective in Lawrence Sanders' *The Burglar in the Library* (No Exit Press, £16.99) - the eighth of Block's novels to feature Bernie Rhodenbarr, bookseller, burglar and solver of mysteries. Block is a witty writer, aware of the games he plays with convention, but here they become mannered. He resuscitates the locked room mystery, and even places his murders in an English country house, albeit one in upstate New York.

This is apparently an application to join that mainly British club of crime novelists identified by Julian Symons as *farceurs*. Here we demand more grime and grit from US crime fiction. James Lee Burke duly obliges in *Climarron Rose* (Orion, £16.99). Burke's PI is Billy Bob Holland, a hairy-chested lawyer racked with guilt but determined to bring terror to a Texas town as corruption threatens. He's tough and tender but, like Stephanie Plum, he has too many points to make.

Walter Mosley's *Gone Fishin'* (Serpeot's Tail, £9.99) is the sixth of his Easy Rawlins novels to be published, but the first he wrote. Here Easy has still to acquire the badges of generic acceptability: he hasn't yet seen action in World War Two, he hasn't moved to California, in some ways he hasn't even acquired full *négritude*. That provisional status gives him and his accomplice, Mouse Alexander, licence to roam. In one virtuoso scene of Southern Gothic, Mosley spends pages on a black preacher's sermon in a town called Parish, while Mouse brilliantly encapsulates the hard-boiled credo: "I think wit' my mouf". Only 150 pages long, *Gone Fishin'* is sprawling, inchoate, exhilarating.

Someone else who thinks with his mouth is Joey Ooe-Way, the sullen hero of Joel Rose's *Kill Kill Faster Faster* (Rebel Inc, £6.99). Lurching in and out of first-person narrative, Joey doesn't fit to high society, nor is he your conventional lowlife. Yet he can talk about the "critic" and "everyman", and characterise the food in the River Café (Brooklyn model) as "drizzle on the plate." In prose like a breathless incantation, Rose has written a witty and poetic variation on several genres: tough guy, proletarian, prison, rags to empty riches. And not a private eye in sight.

**Pick of the week**  
Kill Kill Faster Faster by Joel Rose

Joel Rose

## New light on a total eclipse

I t is an amazing story. Arthur Rimbaud, the unknown 16-year-old delinquent poet, writes to Verlaine - established and nearly 30 - then turns up at the older poet's home in Paris. Verlaine falls in love with the boy and deserts his pregnant wife. The two flee to London and have a violent affair fuelled by huge amounts of alcohol.

Verlaine eventually escapes to his mother in Brussels. Rimbaud follows, only to say he's leaving Verlaine. Verlaine begs him to stay; Rimbaud says no. Verlaine shoots him with a revolver, hits him in the arm, goes to prison. Rimbaud, tries England again - weirdly, he turns up in Reading in 1874 - before abandoning literature and working as a trader in Aden and Ethiopia for the last 11 years of his life. He came back to France in 1891 to die. Verlaine died five years later. Both were victims of bohemianism at its most exultant.

The first quarter of Charles Nicholl's book recounts Rimbaud's earlier life with Verlaine. It is written in high focus, with a strong narrative drive, because much was happening and there is substantial documentation. Then, as Rimbaud embarks on his African period in 1880, the style changes. It falters and drifts in an atmosphere of tropical reverie, hashish dream and sandstorm.

We are among nostalgic yearnings, sun-yellowed extracts from forgotten company ledgers, conjecture, a stream of exotic places and few events. The documentary back-up for this phase is negligible - Rimbaud's few letters home and the recollections of commercial colleagues. Whatever there may be of hard-core evidence Nicholl has assiduously traced. But it doesn't amount to a picture.

The dossier-like form of the ensuing book and its author's feline performance with very speculative material present a constant tease. Perhaps we shall soon come to somewhere; perhaps we shall even meet Rimbaud, strangely sensed as one who, wherever you turn up, has just left the room. Certain of Nicholl's tricks do not feel right. The

Somebody Else: Arthur Rimbaud in Africa 1880-91 by Charles Nicholl, Cape, £18.99

oo-the-road Bob Dylan sub-theme is pure hippy sentimentality. The switches from past to present tense in historical passages is bogus originality. The present tense in biographical work always comes across as mannered, though not in autobiography. In autobiography the present tense brings one closer to the subject, whereas in biography it takes one further away. So the present is obviously less grating when Nicholl employs it to recount his own recent journeys in Rimbaud's footsteps.

Yet Nicholl keeps himself quite as much of a ghost as Rimbaud, in what one may call the peeping-Tom school of travel writing (Bruce Chatwin and Colin Thubron are the recent masters). The author says "Just go about your affairs as though I weren't here", which produces endless scene-setting and no adventure. Nicholl gives us a superb description of the arrival of evening in Djibouti - an evening on which nothing whatsoever happens.

The avoidance of emotional contact is very English and maybe even appropriate. In Africa, Rimbaud sought to turn himself into a stoical, abstracted Englishman. Previously he'd been outrageously the Parisian artist, extravagantly self-aware and expressive, pushing poetry off all sorts of cliffs.

Eventually one adjusts to Nicholl's oscillation of unrealised possibilities and shifts of perspective, even when the background swallows up the foreground. When, for example, a paragraph referring to some obscure record Nicholl has managed to locate begins "There are 14 camel-suppliers named", one knows one's going to be taken through the whole lot. Yet one accepts it because in such a remote, formless terrain of faint echoes and heat-buzz, there isn't much else to do.

Unexpectedly, one comes away with more than a ghost. Nicholl quotes Rimbaud's prescient line:

"Exiled here, I had a stage on which to perform dramatic masterpieces". They were very private masterpieces too. Thankfully his colleagues were less reticent. One describes him as "closed-up". Another said "He was, it was plain to see, an embittered and irascible man". His hair went prematurely grey. He took an Abyssinian mistress but there were no children and his greatest emotional attachment was to a servant boy. A part of him was somehow ego-less, picking up local languages very quickly and slipping effortlessly into the rhythms of native life. He traded in gold, ivory, guns, earthenware jugs of his own design, but not slaves.

It also becomes very clear what drove Verlaine mad. Rimbaud was the classic pain-in-the-neck adolescent, relentlessly sarcastic, clever, surly, uncooperative. He seems to have stayed that way. There is a terrible stubbornness against life in Rimbaud, Nicholl refers to "The horror of stasis: to arrive at the empty inn, at the end of the adventure, and find your old self waiting for you". If you refuse to react with life this is what will happen.

Nicholl doesn't investigate the crassness - or divine idiocy - in Rimbaud, the refusal to connect or care about anything or anybody. Nor, in a book fundamentally about the need to escape, does he pursue that great idea either. Why did Rimbaud need to escape so completely? Why did he stop writing? Why, for that matter, did he start writing? What is the connection between poetry and fury? Lists of camel-suppliers are all very well but some intellectual exploration to parallel the geographical would have been fruitful.

The end is ghastly and mov-

ingly rendered. Rimbaud returns to France with a severe leg infection. The leg is amputated. He becomes trapped in a Marseille hospital, between his need to go north to his family and south to Africa. He dies there, watched over by a sister, and Rimbaud's morose mood at last attains its Hamlet-like oobility.

Ritual masks from Mali and Burkina Faso in 'African Dances' by Claude Savory, with photographs by Michel Huot (Thames & Hudson, £24.95)



# THE TOUCH

"Funny and spare... her reputation is terrific and she completely deserves it"

INDEPENDENT

## JULIE MYERSON

"Myerson's sharp prose and power to perturb are all that her first novel, *Sleepwalking* promised"

SHE

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## Paperbacks



By Christopher Hirst  
and Emma Hagestadt

**The Men Who Murdered Marilyn** by Matthew Smith (Bloomsbury, £6.99) The title of this superior exercise in the conspiracy genre gives the game away – not that we get to know the names. Through a deadpan accumulation of facts, Smith reveals that Monroe was in deep waters. Lead players in the story include the Kennedy brothers and their sleazy gofer Peter Lawford, mobster Jimmy Hoffa and the Mafia. But Smith points his finger at the CIA and "the venomous hatred [for the Kennedys] of the Bay of Pigs survivors".

**Tickle the Public** by Matthew Engel (Indigo, £8.99) Delighting in his rascally source material, Engel stuffs his history of the popular press with quotes. Vivid prose came early – an 1825 boxing report describes "gravy distilling from damaged squinters" – but Harmsworth's 1895 *Daily Mail* was the first successful pop news "package". Engel profiles successive market leaders up to the Sun under Kelvin MacKenzie, whose innovation was "to change the facts to suit his idea of what was required". Not that Engel is censorious: "MacKenzie is a genius. No other word will do." Unlike most studies of the media, this work is as pithy and entertaining as its subject.

**Learning to Drive** by William Norwich (Review, £6.99) It's summer in 1980s New York. "Papa don't Preach" is playing on the radio, Soto is booming and Julian Orr, a 37-year-old gossip columnist, is en route to his driving test. Two hours later he's navigating round Queens with a corpse on his bonnet and a revolver at his head. Journalist William Norwich's first novel takes a few chapters to get going, but this particular honfite of the calamities is well worth the wait.

**Running the Amazon** by Joe Kane (Pan, £7.99) The 1986 expedition which aimed to navigate the Amazon from its Andean source to the Atlantic encountered a plethora of obstacles. At impassable corkscrew gorges, the kayakers had to be lugged over mountain ridges. Later, the canoeists were all but drowned by titanic white waters. Nor were they safe on land, being forced at gun-point to make a contribution (five cans of tuna) to the Shining Path. But the main problem faced by the multinational team was internal, a simmering antagonism which eventually exploded in turbulent break-up.

**Dickie** edited by Brian Scovell (Corgi, £6.99) These tributes to the twitwily, but much-loved ex-umpire Harold Bird range from John Major to Dickie's pharmacist in Barmley ("he used to take garlic pills and now takes cod-liver oil tablets"). Most contributions are a mite predictable: "One of the game's great characters" (M Gattling). But Mike "Bonko" Brearley cites Aristotle, Martin Johnson of the *Telegraph* quotes Dickie on his dream life: "Aye, woke up at four. Terrible dream. It were those boogers Wain and Waqar appealing for flogs again." A fine selection of photos reveals Dickie "like a tree bent and moulded by the prevailing wind" (M Parkinson).

**My Silver Shoes** by Nell Dunn (Bloomsbury, £5.99) Next time Joy goes out with someone she's going to tell them the truth – about her mum, Glad, (going senile), her son (an army deserter) and her council flat (drah). This sequel to Nell Dunn's classic novel *Poor Cow* catches up with Joy and Glad 30 years on as they cage fags and lose boyfriends on an estate in South London.

**Eight German Novellas** new translations by Michael Fleming (Oxford, £6.99) This collection of fantastic and eccentric tales by Ludwig Tieck, Georg Buchner, Theodor Storm et al features as much bad weather as *Wuthering Heights*, though 19th-century Germans were more excited by jewel-laying birds and witches than brooding farmhands and fallen women. Particularly windy is Storm's "The White Horse Rider", a ghost story set in the fenslands of Schleswig Holstein.

## Audiobooks



Two hours of nonstop agonies and ecstasies of "the bandonist man in England" is hard to take but, consumed in short chunks, Rupert Brooke's life and poetry (CSA Teltapes, 2hrs, £8.49) is excellent listening. The combination of Mike Read's no-nonsense gallop through the poet's short life and Douglas Hodge's eager reading of the poems works well.

Christina Hardyment

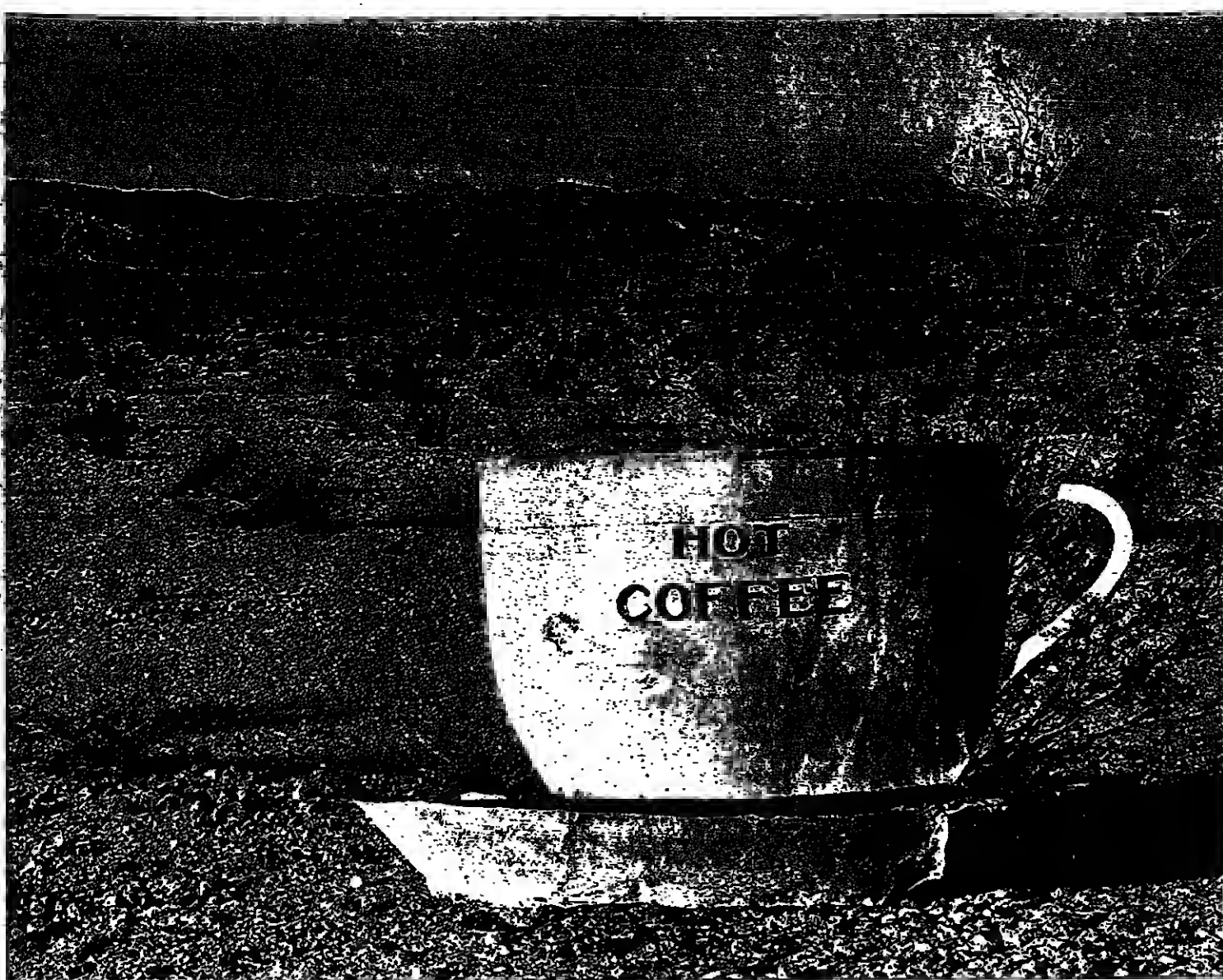
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The Weird West: a landscape by Edward Weston from 'American Photography 1890-1965' (Thames & Hudson, £19.95)

## Farewell, New Croydon

The sheer velocity of coincidence in a million-dollar thriller leaves Hugo Barnacle exhausted

The Big Picture by Douglas Kennedy, Abacus, £16.99 hardback, £9.99 paperback

Ben Bradford, the narrator of Douglas Kennedy's second novel, always wanted to be a globe-trotting photo-journalist but has instead become a Wall Street lawyer with the usual wife and two kids and a home in the posh Connecticut commuter town of New Croydon. Kennedy, New York-born but now a Londoner, collected a million-dollar-plus advance for the US rights to *The Big Picture*. One thing the Americans will not get for their money is the Croydon joke. They'll read it, but they won't get it, as it goes way over their heads and appeals purely to the British readership. Nice touch.

Ben still plays with his impressive collection of cameras and dark-room equipment, but is finding that domestic security is "its own form of hell". Actually, all we are shown on that front is the horrors of nappy-changing and the dull train ride to Grand Central. Ben's real problems are more to do with the fact that his bitchy wife Beth is having it off with a neighbour.

Beth is a failed novelist who blames Ben for making her fail by tying her down. Since her novels were all of the precious autobiographical kind ("That autumn, under a salmon sky, my mother began to sew a quilt in our back

yard"), she could well be kidding herself. Then again, Kennedy has done all right despite some pretty poor writing, as when Ben takes the helm of a fast yacht and says, "The sheer velocity of speed beld me in its thrall," so the reader may prefer to give Beth the benefit of the doubt.

The obvious question, with mid-life crisis imminent, is whether Ben's chances of throwing off suburban shackles and succeeding in photography are any better. It turns out they are, surprisingly so. Beth merely dreams of escape through adultery but Ben takes a more radical approach.

He confronts Beth's lover, kills him, uses the body to fake his own death by fire, takes over the dead man's identity and trust-fund inheritance and runs off to start a new life in Montana. There, the beautiful picture editor of the local paper falls for him, his portraits of

Montana people are acclaimed as "terrific" and "fantastic", and his reportage of a forest fire brings him national fame.

Unfortunately it also brings an inquisitive Beth and her new sugar-daddy husband to his opening of the "Montana Faces" exhibition, so Ben has to do another bunk and "die" all over again. This is easy, because the one man who has discovered his secret suffers a fatal accident in a lonely place within minutes of issuing a blackmail demand, so there's another body handy. Phew. The only difficulty is that if Ben wants to hang on to the beautiful picture editor he will have to tell all, which could place as severe a strain on her love as Kennedy places on our credulity.

A novelist like Geoff Nicholson could probably make a good black face out of this story, but Kennedy seems to be playing it straight. The Croydon joke finds no successors to

speak of, and the emphasis on Ben's grief at leaving his sons behind, the conventional romance and the travelogue-style meditations on the vast Montana landscape resist an ironic approach. The use of convenient unlikelyhoods – the murder victim's lack of relatives, the fact that Ben happens to be passing when the forest fire breaks out, and the black-mailer's ludicrously prompt demise – is apparently meant to be your average kind of sleight-of-hand, not a deliberate alienation technique.

Neither does Kennedy acknowledge the weird shifts of tone that take us from the Richard Ford opening to the Patricia Highsmith mid-section (the murder and its aftermath recall Ripley Under Ground) to the Hollywood silliness of the rest. So far as one can tell, he hasn't noticed and doesn't expect us to either.

It is easy to like *The Big Picture* but hard to admire it. You keep on reading, mostly to see just how absurd it can get. After a certain point, the whole novel amounts to no more than a nakedly earnest pitch for a movie. Fox now have screen rights, but they'll probably change the title, already used for a satire on Hollywood directed by Christopher Guest of *Spinal Tap* fame. So even if the film succeeds, the book will soon be forgotten.

## The mother of all baffles

Nicholas Royle loses the plot but enjoys a firework display

The Days of Miracles and Wonders by Simon Louvish, Canongate, £16.99

Simon Louvish must have been dreading this moment. It was in these pages that he gave Tibor Fischer's *The Collector Collector* such a rubbishing ("this book is truly terrible") that he must have been living in fear of either a nocturnal visit from a thought-gang of Hungarian hitmen or a tit-for-tat review by Fischer of *The Days of Miracles and Wonders*. But Louvish got lucky. He got me. Well, maybe not that lucky.

"How do you describe the indescribable?" asks the blurb. Good question. In essence, this is a novel about western hypocrisy in the Gulf War, but the fall of the communist regimes and an engaging subplot about a frustrated author with murderous intentions towards his former publisher are also entangled. After having read the entire 440 pages, I would have a job to tell you much more than that about what is actually going on. There's the return of Avram Blok from Louvish's previous

novel, *Saxophone Dreams*. I blame morose resonance).

Louvish's prose is energetic and flexible, well up to the challenge posed by its freight of ideas and subject matter, particularly the byzantine world of Middle Eastern politics and the Gulf War. He possesses an enviable range of voice-tones and a useful command of irony. "I adore the English," says one character. "Your Pilkington night-sights are an invaluable asset in the counter-insurgency field. Your Marconi smart mines are a whole generation ahead of your competitors". Some of his funniest moments come when he turns his gaze on Britain (and it's difficult to know where Louvish – born in Glasgow, raised in Jerusalem, resident in London – considers home). "Satellite-television salesmen pile out of a Volkswagen van with striped shirts and peaked red caps, grabbing unwary passersby and forcing them, by painful judo holds, to accept free subscriptions to extra-terrestrial broadcasts, by a newstand poster which proclaims: SADDAM GIVEN LAST CHANCE".

The Gulf War is always crackling in the background, but given the cacophony of voices (you will lose count of the number of narrators) and the mad-

cap grab-bag nature of the novel, it's hard for long stretches to stay with the plot. Not even an apprenticeship spent ploughing through the *nouveau romans* of Nathalie Sarraute and the later works of Robbe-Grillet will quite prepare you for *The Days of Miracles and Wonders*. Which is a shame, because when you've hacked your way through the undergrowth and finally reached a clearing in the text, it's a relief to be mugged by the sudden clarity of the writing, and by the emotional impact of the hostage release and the famously ruthless Allied attack on a Mecca-bound column. The last thing on Louvish's mind should be shooting editors; with the help of one, this could have been a masterpiece.

Now, I get my ideas from passenger jets en route to Heathrow which drop them through the skylight in my loft, and I have to wonder if Louvish lives under the same flightpath. But I don't only like his ideas for having had a couple of them myself (the dream in which the Ceausescu commander the dreamer's car and the image of a dead man playing the clarinet will be familiar to readers of my last

'Now he sold notions to novelists and short-story writers in little bottles and flasks'

## Sketches in freehand

David Dabydeen rejoices in Guyana's new creative dawn

The Ministry of Hope by Roy Heath, Marion Boyars, £16.95

Roy Heath's fiction is wholly based in Guyana and explores family tensions mired in the country's social and political upheavals. His acknowledged talent, in novels like *The Murderer*, is the exposure of passions that can climax in a terrifying disintegration of morality. His new novel is no different. It reveals the nature of Guyana's decay between 1966 and 1992, a period when the Americans, hysterically fearful of communism, established and financed a fascist regime. Political patronage, sexual thuggery, kleptomania and killings bankrupt the society, both morally and economically. Various forms of migration offer the only escape from the net of deceit and intrigue.

That Heath is able to name actual characters as murderers and victims testifies to the continuing role of the writer as political witness and activist. It is also an acknowledgement of the spirit of openness in Guyana today. The post-Cold War period has seen a blooming of literature in Guyana that seeks not only to name the evils of the past but also to signpost the future. Heath's hopefulness lies in the redemptive possibilities of art. His characters are variously trapped and muted in systems of greed, but each continues to struggle towards self-expression. The hero, Kwaku, is a falc

herbalist healer and small-time hustler, but his garrulity and incessant storytelling mark him out as a folk artist. He is a wonderful liar, but his lies are life-giving. They create humour, whereas the lies of the politician are cynical and lack metaphorical colour.

The novel's theme, of art versus power, is made explicit in the character of Surinam, a painter who will not exhibit for tourists and whose refusal to sell himself contrasts with the politician's norm. Surinam's descent into madness mirrors the condition of his society. Anne Correia is a budding painter who ends up as the mistress of a corrupt minister. Her eventual escape is not a migration into the subconscious, as with Surinam, but to a remote part of Guyana where she lives among a pre-Columbian tribe.

Of course there is a certain holiness in her utopianism, and Heath describes her escape to "a world far removed from coastal certainties" in Conradian terms. Kwaku is a storytelling liar; Surinam a rather precocious artist; and Anne a seeker after bogus innocence. But for all their failings and lack of genuine artistic talent, they share a desire to cleanse themselves of the corruption of their environment.

Heath's novel is Guyanese not only in its social landscape but in its attempt at a native structure. The novel is populated with unevenly developed characters, and the narrative is interrupted by the sudden reappearance of some minor or unfinished figure. Long conversations end inconclusively, or else there are seemingly unnecessary digressions. Such refusal to come to the point can be irritating to a British reader. The lack of finish, however, conveys the spontaneity of Guyanese "orature", and challenges our expectations of what a novel should be.



Roy Heath: writer as political witness



Paul Theroux: strong taste of Hong Kong

## Sunset boulevards

E Jane Dickson on the expats' twilight

Kowloon Tong by Paul Theroux, Hamish Hamilton, £16.99

Neville "Bunt" Mullard is the proprietor of Imperial Stitching in Hong Kong, a tidy business specialising in the manufacture of elaborate badges for the breast pockets of British club blazers. Bunt (short for Baby Bunting) is 43 but lives with his mother in a house called Albion Cottage. He drives a 1958 Rover and listens to the news on an ancient Roberts Radio. The stuff of Bunt's daily life is made in Britain, built to last, but with the imminent handover of the colony to China, the durability of all things British is ironically beside the point. Paul Theroux is not a man to stint the signifiers. His latest novel, *Kowloon Tong*, can at times resemble a piece of Baroque statuary, so heavily encrusted with allegory that the subject seems to droop under the weight.

Theroux has rejected a panoramic vision of Hong Kong in its last days of empire for a straightforward domestic narrative. Bunt and his mother, Betty, are approached by the sinister Mr Hung, a representative of the Chinese army who wants to buy the auspiciously sited Imperial Stitching building. Bunt at first refuses to take the "Chinky-Chonk" seriously, but it becomes clear that Mr Hung's "offer" is more in the nature of a requisition.

Blustering and bewildered, Bunt serves as a kind of expat everyman: "When had the subject peoples of the British empire ever been anything but riddles? The Chinese were a supreme and slitty example of that. They were always out of focus, and the nearer you got to them the harder they were to see." By the time Bunt adjusts his focus to the new reality, the game is up.

An habitué of Kowloon's "blue hars", Bunt fails to find relief in sex. "Sex was a balancing act that always ended in failure, a fall, a sense of hav-

ing slipped and been inattentive: of not knowing how to explain it. You refused to remember it, and when you tried again the failure was repeated."

Such attentive articulation of complex emotion marks Theroux as a writer at the height of his powers, and makes the reader all the more impatient with the slapdash characterisation in the bulk of the novel. Mr Hung is given one brilliantly paced scene explaining the esoteric pleasures of Chinese cuisine: "This is delicious because it has been strung up," he said. "You know how? Some string – tie it". He made deft throttling and knotting gestures with his fingers. "Trust it well and hang it for days. Let it air dry, just dangle there." The rest of the time, however, Hung is your standard inscrutable, straight from the files of Charlie Chan.

Similarly, Betty Mullard with her slipping dentures and racist remarks is a grand guignol horror, a cross between Maggie Thatcher and Giles's Grapdina. Nuances of speech are lovingly observed, but occasionally jar. The racism and vulgarity of the expats are surely best left unembellished. And when was the last time a doughy matron reached for her "gamp" when the weather turned nasty?

Unsurprisingly, some of the best passages of *Kowloon Tong* are Theroux's evocation of atmosphere. Long after the book is finished, the taste of Hong Kong – the gritty air and bus fumes, the stewed steam of the mottled sea-water sloshing against the pier, the foul dust from the land reclamation – is vivid in the reader's mouth. Patchily accomplished, but always readable, *Kowloon Tong* hovers between realism and satire. If it is realism, the characters are too gross. If it is satire, the story is too small. The problem – not perhaps such a big one – is a problem of scale.



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# travel & outdoors

سكننا من الاصل

On the 30th birthday of the Kinks' chartbuster, Waterloo Sunset, Simon Calder takes a lyrical trip around SE1

Thirty years ago, this was a busy week in pop music. Scott Mackenzie's only hit - "San Francisco (be sure to wear some flowers in your hair)" - hit the US charts. In Britain, the summer of love was a less glamorous affair. The new arrival here was "Waterloo Sunset" by the Kinks. Ray Davies' gentle love song revolves at 45 rpm around one of the least celebrated but most magical areas of London: the scruffy sweep of shoreline bounded by Westminster and Blackfriars bridges. Armed with a selection of lines from the lyrics, you can spend one fine day on the not-too-long and winding roads of SE1.

"Dirty old river, must you keep rolling..." The Thames throws a massive loop around Waterloo, thereby endowing the area with spectacular river views. The hodgepodge of land that comprises the Waterloo peninsula provides a fine 180-degree prospect, sweeping from St Paul's Cathedral to the Houses of Parliament - now, as in 1967, dominated by a Labour government.

Dirty? The Thames is not nearly as nifty as it was when it acted as main sewer for the whole of London, but probably not yet sparklingly clean enough for a day at the beach. A shame, because when the Thames is suitably low, some genuinely sandy beaches are revealed on the south bank. Low tides this week have revealed a good few patches of grade one sand.

The most accessible beach is just in front of the Oxo Tower - a fanciful redbrick creation that is the most glorious architectural advertisement for stock exchanges. Follow the signs for the National Theatre, then walk east along the riverside walk until you're just in front of the tower. A ladder leads down to the sand; don't try this at high tide. If the clouds interrupt your sunbathing wander further along the shore to the Anchor pub, where Tom Cruise sank a pint at the end of *Mission Impossible*.

Old? Certainly the Thames followed the same course in Roman times, which is when the invaders set a sociological precedent by deciding they preferred north of the Thames. The reason was not that chariot drivers refused to go south of the river after dark (as taxi drivers are loath to do today), but because the shore comprised mostly uninhabitable marshland. The swamp was drained in medieval times, but is remembered in street names like Lower Marsh - now a straggly market. The neighbourhood took the name of Waterloo from the vast mid-Victorian-meets-21st century railway station, whose platforms lope across SE1 for half a mile.



Flipside of Waterloo: the Kinks, centre, put the area on the map, even before Eurostar made it a mainline attraction

PHOTOGRAPHS: GEOFFREY KATZ/ COLORIFIC; GRAHAM HARRISON/ TELEGRAPH LIBRARY; MIKE McQUEEN, MICHAEL HARRIS AND JASON HAWKES/TONY STONE

architecture of Southwark Cathedral, a mile downriver, but it has an intriguing history. "Built by a grateful nation in Thanks-giving for the victory of Waterloo", announces the plaque within the milky neo-Classical columns. The tablet then tells of 8 December 1940, when the church took a direct hit from a German bomb.

"This Waterloo church, stoutly built by fine builders, took the shock and shuddered to her depths. In those depths 150 people, including the parish priest, were assembled. The old church, the mother of souls in the parish, true to her maternal instinct, gathered the full force of the blast into her heart and gave her life for her children. Nobody was hurt."

The church was rebuilt to become the Christian Centre for the Festival of Britain in 1951, and is now the only British church to be sponsored by Eurostar.

"Terry and Julie cross over the river, where they feel safe and sound" Perhaps the lovers are anxious about the homeless people who inhabit the Ball Ring - a circular concrete monstrosity whose undercarriage conceals the underclass of SE1. But in 10 years of living in Waterloo, I have never encountered any hostility from the impoverished residents.

"As long as they gaze on Waterloo sunset, they are in paradise"

The view from the bridge has changed surprisingly little in the past 30 years, and even Monet - who rented a room in the Savoy Hotel whence he painted the bridge obsessively a century ago - would recognise the scene. On the South Bank, brutalist concrete has risen from wartime dereliction (and romantic strollers probably wish it hadn't). To the north, the most notable addition is the Eighties embellishment of Charing Cross Station. But the structure hardly impedes the capital's miraculous mirador.

The finest sunsets can be seen six weeks from now, when the midsummer sun will appear to crash in flames behind the magnificence of Somerset House. But even better than the Waterloo sunset is the summer sunrise from the bridge, creating a stunning silhouette of St Paul's Cathedral while splashing sharp shadows across Westminster. To respond to the demand from another Kinks song, "Give me two good reasons why I oughta stay": try Waterloo sunset and sunrise.

Tourist information in Waterloo: the London Tourist Board desk in the International Currency Exchange office in the Eurostar arrivals hall, open 8.30am-9pm daily.

"People so busy, makes me feel dizzy" Since the Eurostar terminal opened in 1994, Waterloo has struggled with its new role of international gateway. Because of work on the Jubilee Line extension and the old Bakerloo Line, the station has been a shambles throughout the 1990s, with millions of people swarming like flies around Waterloo's one remaining underground line, the Northern. No doubt taxi lights shine so bright because the drivers are getting so much extra business.

Tourists who persevere with London's biggest building site are rewarded with some of the capital's greatest attractions. The water in the new Aquarium, which occupies part of County Hall, is much cleaner than that in the river. The GLC politicians were evicted from the capital's seat of government in 1986, and replaced six weeks ago by a bunch of sharks.

The Museum of the Moving Image is the best concealed in London, hurried beneath the southern approach to Waterloo Bridge. It traces the flickering story of film and television, but for dizzy old Sixties hippies the most appealing feature is the collection of ancient TV advertisements.

To avoid the dizzying crowds at MOMI, head towards the sunset in the direction of St Thomas's Hospital. The Florence Nightingale is the smallest yet most startling museum in SE1. You discover that the Lady performed most of her Lamp duties just across the Bosphorus from Istanbul, well away from the Crimean theatre of war.

"Every day I look at the world from my window" Ray Davies is a Muswell Hill man, born and bred in London N10. If he were ever to move south of the Thames, though, he should choose Roupell Street. Amid the shambles that surrounds Waterloo East station, this handsome early 19th-century thoroughfare could be a movie set. Aside from the archbishop's residence at Lambeth Palace, this is the most desirable address in SE1. The views are better, mind, from the apartments carved out of the old Shell Building that huddles its way on to the riverside. And the added bonus for residents is that they look away from, rather than towards the Shell Building, a structure that looks as if it was imposed on Waterloo by someone with a grudge against society and a giant Lego outfit.

When the makers of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* wanted the perfect place for the corniest line in the film - Hugh Grant stammering to Andi McDowell: "In the words of David Cassidy, while he was still with the Partridge Family, 'I think I love you'" - they chose the promenade just outside the National Film Theatre. Buster, the film story of the Great Train Robber, ended at the same place, with Phil Collins manning a flower stall. The real Buster Edwards was a florist, but his stall was located underneath the rail arch on Waterloo Road. The local hero is no more; he hanged himself three years ago.

"Terry meets Julie, Waterloo Station, every Friday night"

And why not? Waterloo is quite the most romantic place in London. Amorous weekends to Paris begin and end at the Waterloo Eurostar terminal. But Parisians coming to London get much the better deal; while the area around the Gare du Nord is in a remote part of the capital, French weekenders to Britain arrive in the heart of London. Within five minutes, Thierry et Jules can be hand-in-hand on the Riverside Walk - a location beloved of film producers.

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"I am so lazy, don't want to wander, I stay at home at night"

Anyone staying home at night is missing an extraordinary concentration of entertainment. Within a quarter-mile square, the Royal National Theatre has three auditoria plus live foyer performances; the Queen Elizabeth Hall stages the likes of Ray Davies, and when it is not hosting Labour's victory party, the Royal Festival Hall is one of Britain's leading music venues. On Baylis Road, you find a couple of Vics (one Old, one Young), and the local cinema is the National Film Theatre.

True, some of the local pubs are the roughest this side of Whitechapel, but decent places to eat have proliferated along Waterloo Road in the past four years. The old fire station has become a trendy restaurant called the Old Fire Station, the flash of blue adjacent to the Old Vic signifies the Bar Central, and the best fish and chips in the South are served at Superfish at number 191 - you can tell by the dozens of taxis parked outside each evening.

"And I don't feel afraid" Seek sanctuary on Waterloo Road. St John the Evangelist lacks the status and

## The Belgian connection

You'd think there would be a world of difference between a bright June morning at the beginning of the 19th century and a damp May hunchtime at the end of the 20th century. But here at the original Waterloo, beyond the outskirts of Brussels, you would be wrong.

With your back to the rather ugly monument known as the lion mound, you are standing where the Dutch and Flemish soldiers stood 182 years ago under the command of William, Prince of Orange. Wellington's troops were gathered to the left, around the farmhouse of Mont St Jean. Facing the 68,000 Allied troops, less than a mile away on the ridge at Belle Alliance, the 72,000 soldiers of Napoleon's army spearheaded by the French Imperial Guard.

It's not that long ago, maybe nine generations, and when you look over the open, slightly rolling countryside it's easy to imagine that morning. There's a feeling when you walk through the fields themselves that the land holds on to the memory. Every now and again you come across two or three gravestones, clustered on a grassy patch in the middle of a ploughed field, with the furrows carefully skirting around them and cow parsley blowing gently across them.

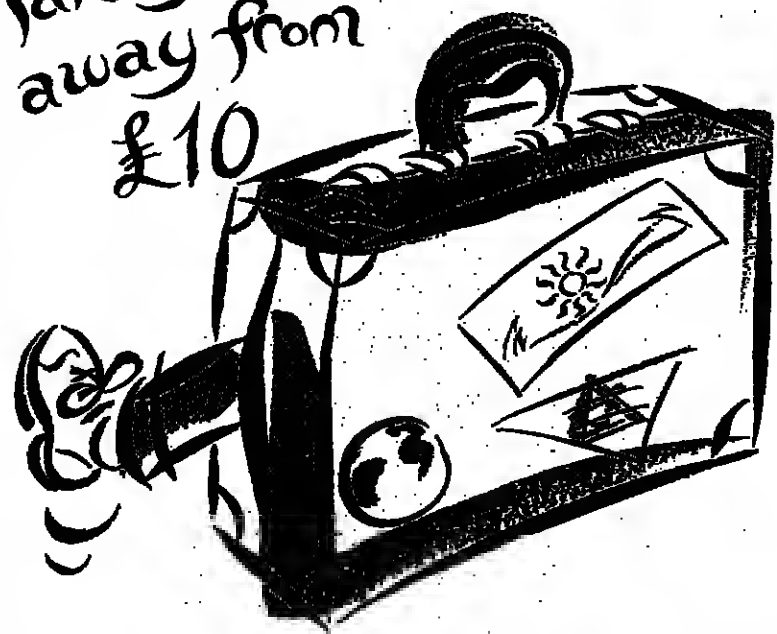
The main Brussels to Charleroi road still cuts through the middle of the battlefield, and is lined with grander memorials to the dead. Near the farmhouse of La Haie-Saint, a stone column commemorates the Honourable Sir Alexander Gordon of the Scots Guards. He was Wellington's aide de camp, only 28 when he was killed. On the side of the column a long inscription ends with the words: "In testimony of feelings which no language can express, a disconsolate sister and five surviving brothers have erected this simple memorial to the object of their tenderest affection."

On the farmhouse itself, a plaque informs you that at about 6.30 on the evening of 18 June, it was taken for the French by Marshall Ney after "heroic assaults"; the scarred, chipped, white-brick walls still bear witness to them.

By the end of the day 13,000 men were dead, more than half of them from the losing French side. No wonder these fields feel haunted. And as you walk away and look north-west you remember that these ghosts are just the forerunners of those belonging to the Flanders fields only 50 miles away, and five generations closer to, this spring day.

Philippa Goodrich

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## The Belgian connection

You'd think there would be a world of difference between a bright June morning at the beginning of the 19th century and a damp May hunchtime at the end of the 20th century. But here at the original Waterloo, beyond the outskirts of Brussels, you would be wrong.

With your back to the rather ugly monument known as the lion mound, you are standing where the Dutch and Flemish soldiers stood 182 years ago under the command of William, Prince of Orange. Wellington's troops were gathered to the left, around the farmhouse of Mont St Jean. Facing the 68,000 Allied troops, less than a mile away on the ridge at Belle Alliance, the 72,000 soldiers of Napoleon's army spearheaded by the French Imperial Guard.

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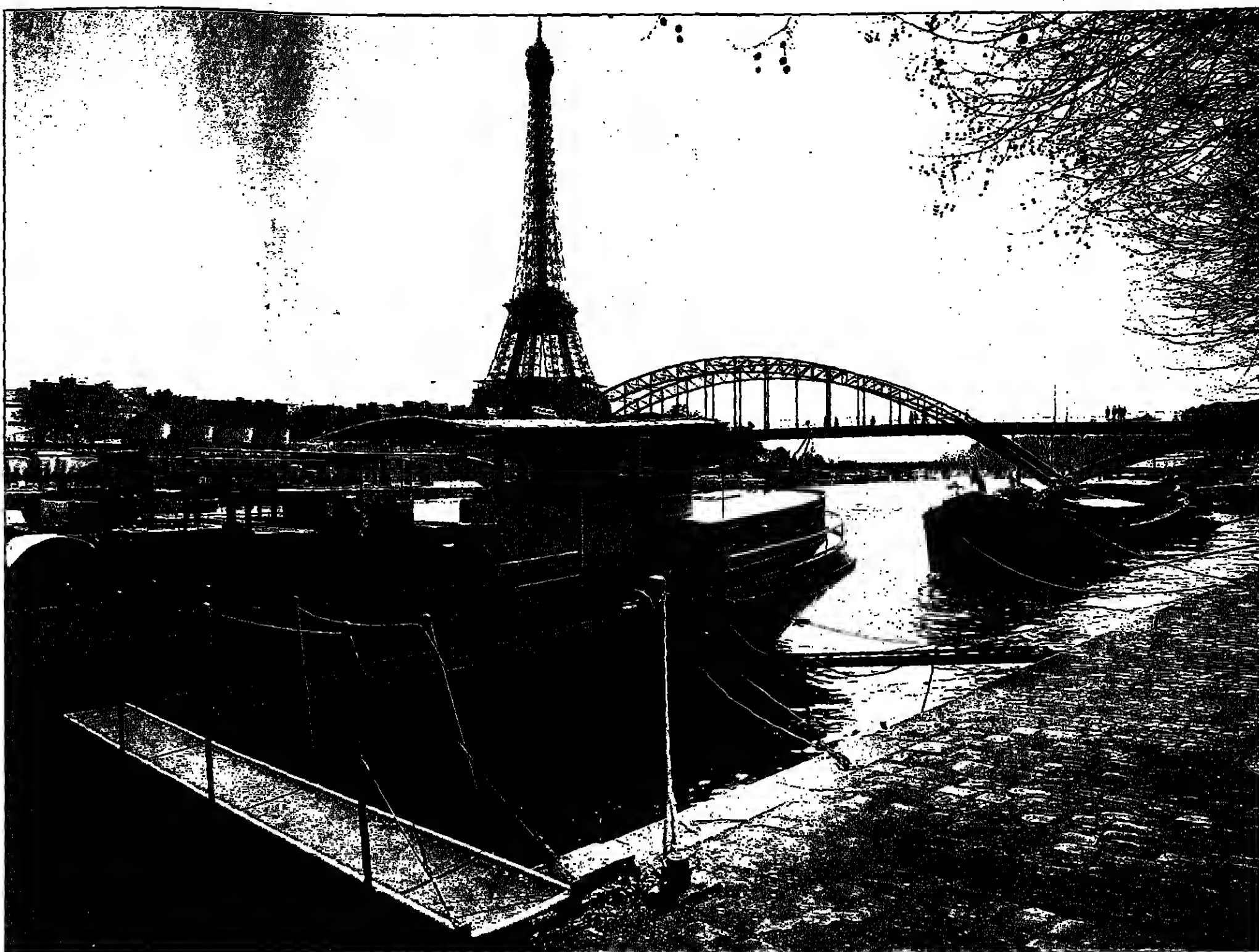
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# Rollin' down the river



A world away in Paris: slow down, think local, think river and canal. Below, La Chouette floats past Notre Dame

France is affordable again. But what about the holiday hordes? Frank Bough escaped them on a luxury river cruise to Paris

In 1996, we very nearly missed France completely. Not to go for a whole year – unthinkable. It was August before we could manage it, and who wants to go then? (They've been known to declare St Tropez closed on several occasions during that month, with not a single car space left.)

Then there was the exchange rate. Last summer it struggled to cough up 7.40 francs to the pound – miserly, and entirely unsuited for any kind of mental arithmetic. Who could work out the price of anything? Which is why in 1996, one in five Francophiles turned their back on the country, and holidayed somewhere else.

But, lo and behold, this year France is back in business. The visitors are booking in again. Why? Well, to start with, it is as if the whole country, sorely distressed by the large drop in visitors, and feeling it where it really hurts, in the pocket, has taken a crash course in how to be nice to visiting foreigners. Particularly the British, for whom France has always been a favourite destination.

Well, we're much the same as they: fiercely independent, proud of country, of language and of history. They don't like us much because we shout at them in English, and expect them to reply in English. But try a *Bonjour*, and you'll be astonished what a lovely, friendly chap the onion man can be. And then, of course, there's the exchange rate. I did a quick and well-timed bank raid a week or two back and came out with nine francs for every pound I'd left behind. Gives you a wonderful warm feeling. But here we have a problem. If the hordes are returning to France in 1997, how best can we avoid them?

My advice is to ignore the Riviera and the Mediterranean coast. Forget the Alps, swarming with walkers and mountaineers. Back away from the Atlantic coast. M Hulot, his family and other Parisians are there in force. Instead, slow down, think local, and think river and canal, as we did.

The wonderful thing about travelling on inland waterways is that they impose upon you their own tempo of life.

When you're on a converted barge, as we were, you cannot do anything in a hurry. The boat travels, in stately fashion, at four miles an hour. Your mind adapts much the same speed, and within a day you are really relaxed.

La Chouette – the Owl, for so she is called – is the pride and joy of Englishman Bob Marsland and his wife Bobbie. They found her in Holland, working on a dredger, with a crane and bucket in her belly and conveyor belts everywhere. She was filthy, old and, at 32 metres, too long for the French canals on which they wanted her to make a living for them. With admirable enterprise, nay courage, they bought her, cut two metres out of her midriff, and stuck both halves together again. Then came the refit. Mahogany, brass, panelling, bar, galley, lounge and three staterooms.

You learn why people take before and after photos. The comparison is unbelievable. The once shabby La Chouette was now elegant and beautiful.

We spent a gorgeous week, starting

on the Canal du Loing, south-east of Paris, and then switching to the Seine for a truly imperial entry into the capital. The surrounding countryside is so close to the heart of the city. There's a narrow collar of industrial suburbia and then suddenly there are the famous city-centre islands, and the buttresses of Notre Dame cathedral.

And throughout the entire journey there was so much pleasure: lovely houses on the riverbank, flowers everywhere, restaurants, churches and chateaux. The skipper will stop when you fancy, to enjoy what you will. We played boules, and were given tuition on our technique by the locals, all in the friendliest possible way. When we left to drive home, La Chouette continued on her way up the River Marne, towards Epernay and Champagne country.

We'd stayed true to something that splendid travel writer Arthur Eperon had taught us years ago. When asked where he'd been on his holiday, he always said "I've not been on holiday. I've been travelling in France". It still



can be done, in France, at the very height of a European summer.

Prices for all-inclusive seven-day cruises on La Chouette vary from £5,700 for six people hiring the entire boat to £950 per person for a double room. Call 01273 504076 for details.

Frank Bough presents 'Travel Live' on the cable and satellite Travel Channel.



Simon Calder

This paper will not be entering the competition to win a million by writing nice things about Portugal

Bribery is not a term you would associate with Britain's travel industry. So I pass on the following items from the travel trade press only for your interest.

You have every right to expect that your travel agent will offer whatever product is best for you. So if you need a business-class ticket to North America and he or she suggests that you fly Icelandair via Reykjavik, the reason is the excellence of Saga Business Class rather than the "£100 of Marks & Spencer vouchers awarded with every business-class booking" that the airline is promising.

M&S does well out of the travel industry: in the past few weeks, the Turkish holiday specialist Savile has been offering a £25 gift voucher, redeemable at M&S, Our Price, Boots or Next. After six bookings from a single branch, the pay-off increases to £50.

The car rental giant Avis promises "Five lucky agents each month go to the hot and happening 'TFI Friday' TV show, then paint the town red at a London hotspot". Even if your agent's luck is not in, three rental reservations will earn him or her free cinema tickets. Across the Channel, Holyman Sally Line has been offering incentives for bookings on the new catamaran service from Ramsgate to Ostend: Odeon cinema tickets or Blockbuster video rental vouchers.

Hard cash is the secret of the Colombian airline, Avianca, which begins flights to Bogota this week. The new service is good for low-budget travellers to South America – since the Venezuelan airline Viasa closed in January, there has been a shortage of cheap seats to Latin America. Your agent stands to benefit, too: Avianca pays double the normal nine per cent commission.

Even the Association of British Travel Agents has got into the act. This year's ABTA convention is to be held in Tenerife. Each summer holiday booking to this Canary Island earns the agent a £20 discount on the convention package.

Travel journalists have long had to deal with the incentives offered by holiday companies. From this week's postbag alone, for example, I can select between free rail travel for all the family to Paris, two offers of all-expenses paid trips to South Africa, or this luxury break:

"Mid-morning executive champagne mini-coach to Rhinefield House, a magnificent country house hotel at the heart of the New Forest, with delightful ornamental ponds and grounds. Afternoon exploring the New Forest by horse or hike. Return for swimming, solarium or steam room" – and so on for three arduous days.

The Independent saves me the bother of choosing by operating a strict no-freebie policy. Accordingly, I am happy to recommend the services of the low-cost airline easyJet because I have bought plenty of cheap tickets on its flights between Scotland and London – rather than because easyJet's founder has invited me to watch tomorrow's Monaco Grand Prix from his apartment overlooking the racetrack.

In the same vein, this paper will not be entering a new competition to win a million by writing nice things about Portugal. The Portuguese tourism authorities have just raised the freebie stakes by offering 1,000,000 escudos – about £3,600 – for the "best piece of reportage publishing or promoting Portuguese tourism in the media".

The latest improbable location to promote itself as a tourist destination is Hounslow in west London. Adding its weight to the campaign, Greater London Radio ran a competition for the best slogan for this unprepossessing community, that straddles the Great West Road. The winning entry relied upon the ease of access to the main road to the west: "Hounslow – the footsplat borough, on both sides of the A4."

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## Trouble spots Rail travel around the world

Information from the new edition of the **Thomas Cook Overseas Timetable** (£8.40)

**United States:** "All the trains that were expected to finish last year, when Amtrak [the operator] ran out of money, have now ceased to run. However, the rolling stock saved by the termination of these trains has been redeployed to permit the daily operation of several others, and the California Zephyr and the Empire Builder now run daily throughout."

**Senegal/Mali/Togo:** "We are advised that, apart from the international service to Mali, all passenger rail operations in Senegal have been suspended. Apparently, the system in Togo still struggles on, with two locomotives

kept running by cannibalising others. What will happen if one of these breakdowns remains to be seen."

**Argentina:** "Trains are faster, there are more of



**something to declare**

them, and we understand that they often run to time as well, which is a new experience in that country where years of neglect has led to trains operating anything up to 24 hours

late as a matter of course."

**Philippines:** "The railway, long considered a hopeless case, and with services so few and far between that people were actually living on the track, has made a revival of sorts. Promises are being made of reintroduced services to the south."

**Tunisia/Algeria:** "In the last issue we advised that the international train from Tunis to Algeria was probably suspended. Confirmation has now arrived, and all services, freight as well, are suspended because of the destruction of a bridge by rebels in Algeria."

Information on surface transport is always wanted by the compilers; you can fax them on 01753 503596.

## Bargain of the week

At the start of June, rail fares may rise when the new summer schedules commence. Until then, one of the best bargains in rail travel is on Chiltern Railways (0990 165165). The Family & Friends Ticket, which costs £35, allows travel to London from various stations in the West Midlands and Warwickshire for two adults and up to two children. You can make your return journey any time within a month.

## A likely story

"Moscow, first-class return, £810" – advertisement in *Travel Weekly*. How can this be? The best that British Airways can offer between London and the Russian capital is a club-class fare costing nearly £1,400. But this advertisement promises "The sophistication of Airbus. Inflight cuisine by Marriott. Exclusive departure lounges". The solution is at the foot of the ad from IMS Travel (0171-224 4678), where the familiar winged hammer and sickle announces that this is, of course, a flight on Aeroflot.

## Visitors' book

The Florence Nightingale Museum, St Thomas' Hospital, Waterloo, London SE1

An excellent exhibition, makes one very proud to be a nurse – Patrick J Boyle, SRN, RSCN, Ireland. Remarkable how full circle we have come in nursing – Carol Ann Duck, Texas. On a visit to London before going to Bosnia for six months. Hopefully in case of emergency we will be taken care of in the spirit of Florence Nightingale – four members of B Company, 101 Tank Battalion, the Netherlands.

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# Into the heart of the hero's homeland

Three years ago today, Transkei's favourite son was inaugurated as South Africa's president. Philip Hoare goes back to Nelson Mandela's roots



Roots: Apartheid kept a lid on change in the Transkei where life still follows the slow tribal rhythms

PHOTOGRAPH: NETWORK

The Transkei – complete with its imperialist definite article – has an evocative ring about it, but the origins of the name are peculiarly pedestrian. It is, literally, the land across the River Kei – a cue for David Lean jokes, as we crossed the bridge at the border which used to separate this Xhosa homeland from the old South Africa.

The new South Africa is all out to promote the delights of its Wild Coast – hence the conversion of the concrete pillbox border control to a tourist bureau. Happily for seekers of solace, it is largely unattended.

One of the chief joys of the region – now part of the Eastern Cape Province – is the fact that its beauties remain almost totally unspoilt. Its artificial designation as a homeland may have been a cynical ploy of the Apartheid years, but this has also preserved the area's character. Driving north from the coastal city of East London, you quickly lose the poverty of modern townships behind, and regain a land of subsistence farming, incredibly friendly locals, and lots of immaculately dressed schoolchildren. It seems the birthplace of Madiba – a Xhosa endearment allotted to President Nelson Mandela and now adopted throughout the country – also retains much of his forgiving, open character.

We'd heard that the road to the old Transkei capital, Umata, passed through Qunu (pronounced, like Xhosa, with a palatal click on the first syllable), the village where Madiba grew up. Accordingly, after a night in a cockroach-infested country hotel at Idutywa, we made a dawn run on Qunu. It rose romantically through river valley mists, set on the highveld which undulates gently towards the coast. Here, in the village of characteristic wattle-and-daub rondavels, the 20th century's last great hero grew up.

Unfortunately, our expedition to find his childhood home was not successful, partly because the locals are rather guarded about their President's origins: it is perhaps too personal a matter for foreigners to come gawping at the Mandela home-stead, exhibiting as it does his humble beginnings.

However, they pointed out Madiba's country retreat: a low bungalow-cum-compound in yellow brick to which the President escapes at any opportunity. Every morning just before dawn, Madiba sets off on an exhausting (for his companions) bike across the hills, talking all the time, surrounded by a wide diamond-shaped phalanx of bodyguards.

The President's love for the place is perfectly understandable. It is a beautiful landscape, all rolling hills bedecked with flame-coloured aloes. Umata, at its centre, is a fantastically African town, with street-sellers purveying anything from bootleg trainers to bubble-bath in gin bottles. Here you book accommodation for the Wild Coast reserves in ancient offices lit by flickering emergency electric lights. There are frequent power cuts, and the telephone system is equally erratic. We made the mistake of arriving there on a Saturday, and found only a young man on bushfire watch, one ear glued to his radio as he told us we would have to return on Monday for our bookings.

Undeterred, we set off for the coast. As we descended, the climate became appreciably hotter. An hour later we pulled up by the side of the road and realised that the vegetation had turned totally tropical. Paw-paw, banana and avocado trees had sprung up to take the place of the cacti-like red spikes of aloes, and a million insects and birds were celebrating the fact. The only settlement of any size on the aptly-named Wild Coast is Port St John's – a haunted old town named after the Sao Joao, wrecked there in 1552. There's a faded hotel, and an excellent guest house, and the whiff of dagga (dope) is never far away. With its deserted sandy beaches, craggy coastline and palms, Port St John's has the air of a retreat from civilisation; few white South Africans go there.

They don't know what they're missing: the view from the subtropical terrace of The Lodge must be one of the best in the world. Yet such beauty can be treacherous: an inordinate amount of seagoing vessels have met sticky ends on these rocks, and beads and bits of crockery are still being washed ashore from 18th-century disasters.

Despite the fact that there are only about three Tharmac roads in the whole region, it is a pleasure to drive through, because of the affable nature of the people. Even when hurtling down a dirt track and blowing dust in their faces, the school kids and farmers we passed seemed to find the rare sight of obviously lost white people entirely hilarious and remarkable, and our arms ached from reciprocal waving. A few Xhosa words and phrases go down well: "Molweni" in greeting, "Siya bulela" in thanks; but getting the click right to ask for the river Xora with a dusty mouth is no easy matter.

The Wild Coast lacks any coast roads whatsoever – for each seaside destination, you must return

to the Umata north-south highway – and this may explain why one of the world's most beautiful regions is still largely unexplored, save for a handful of thankfully small resort hotels. It is best explored on foot; the whole coastline is one big hiking freeway. Permits are required to walk through the nature reserves – you must walk north to south and water is available at butts, sited every seven miles.

To walk the entire Wild Coast would take two weeks, so we took a softer option. For two nights, we stayed at one of the few "developed" resorts, a low-key collection of thatched cottages at the mouth of the Umngazi river. From here you can

take a day's hike to one of the most southerly mangrove swamps in Africa. It was a fantastically primeval sight: white mangrove trees whose aerial roots stuck surreally up out of the grey mud, itself potted with a thousand drillholes, homes to scurrying sesamid crabs. The upper branches of the trees were festooned like nuclear Christmas trees with pendant mangrove snails, all curled up in their twirly cone shells, waiting for the tide to return.

They must have had a good snigger at us ignorant incomers, lounging blithely on a grassy knoll with no idea that the tide was coming in fast. We got up to go, and found ourselves marooned. Fortunately we were rescued by a motorised dinghy containing two Baywatch babes...

For me, however, the highlight of the Wild Coast was at one of the huge nature reserves that encompass large tracts of the coastline. It took nearly a day to get to Dwea, involving a pitch-black drive along unimproved gullies. It was out a good idea to drive at night. Even the locals seemed less amenable under the cover of darkness; we stopped once for directions and found ourselves intruding on what was probably a muti (witchcraft) ceremony. At last Dwea came in sight, and having handed our official papers to a suspicious and conspicuously armed guard at a barbed-wire gate, we were shown up steep stone steps to a cabin. Only at dawn the next morning did we realise it was built on 30ft-high stilts, raising us to the level of the forest canopy, and that we were the only occupants in the vast reserve.

It felt rather like being kings of your own country. After breakfast in our cute log cabin (shared with a pair of monkeys which brazenly raided our fruit bowl, and an unidentified possum-like creature which had made its home under the gas cooker), we walked along an empty beach festooned with jewel-like shells (and the odd desiccated baby shark). Then we climbed to Kobole Point and down over the Wild Coast. Its white beaches and verdant bays, its herds of eland and swarms of crab, its deep forests and shallow rockpools, seemed to belong to us alone.

## GETTING TO THE TRANSKEI

The closest international airport is Durban, from Heathrow three times a week by British Airways (0345 222111) and South African Airways (0171-312 5000); if you book before 14 May, SAA has a fare of £433 including tax. A connection on South African Airlines to Umata costs £147 return.

## GETTING TO MPUMALANGA/EASTERN TRANSVAAL

The lowest fare to Johannesburg through Transkei is £408 on Air France via Paris (valid from Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh, and London) – return before 13 June. Flightbookers (0171-757 3000) has a fare to Johannesburg of £400, including tax, on South African Airways, valid throughout June. From Johannesburg, there are trains at least daily to the gateway town of Nelson Mandela Bay.

The Royal Hotel in Pilgrim's Rest is on 00 27 1376 81100; a double room costs £30 per person per night, including breakfast. The Mount Sheba Hotel (00 27 1376 81241) has a winter special of £45



## Africa's white tribe

Peter Griffiths makes a trek to Boer country

There can be few more unpopular commodities on sale in the new South Africa than Boer history. The old white supremacist Afrikaner has few friends in a world still hailing the end of white minority rule. Yet in some of the most beautiful parts of Nelson Mandela's new nation, the controversial story of the white settlers is still being offered as the sole attraction.

The footsteps of the Boers are nowhere more visible than in the rolling hill country of Mpumalanga – which, until the boundaries of apartheid were unravelled, was known as the Eastern Transvaal. This green and scenic region marks the far end of the Great Trek, the legendary exodus of Boer farmers away from British rule in the Cape during the 1830s. With their ox-carts and hunting rifles, they pushed eastwards and northwards through an unforgiving expanse in search of new territory. The African locals they met along the way were either scattered, subdued or enslaved.

Today, superbly positioned hotel hideaways tempt "the exhausted executive" with comfort, outdoor pursuits, good food, wine, and clear mountain air. But buy a tourist map of this region and the innocent abroad could still be forgiven for thinking that there is no human history here except that of the white settlers. Three years into the brave new world, there is virtual silence about black South African culture along

this particular tourist route.

Pilgrim's Rest, near Lydenburg, is a tourist trap which encapsulates much of this paradox. The fever that followed the discovery of a gold nugget in a river bed here in 1873 made the town boom for more than a decade. Today, this remote mountain bolt-hole looks much as it did in those gold-rush days. Wooden buildings with red corrugated-iron roofs line the main street. Since 1971, the town has been preserved as a living museum. The Digger's Den, part of the Royal Hotel, is decorated with sepia images of busy tented camps, the pained faces of hopeful prospectors, and the heavily laden gold coach about to brave the hazards of Robbers Pass. Guided tours leave from here five times daily along old wagon trails in search of miners' diggings, kitchens, caves and graves.

On a nearby plateau, the luxurious thatched Mount Sheba hotel offers a hiker's paradise, with trails leading around the wooded mountainside and back to a forecourt lined with rusting mining trucks and drilling equipment. The hotel study is stuffed with books in which the 1870s prospectors are revered with ancestral pride, as examples of the ability to "triumph over adversity". Local folklore brims with such outback tales, none more popular than the story of *Jack of the Bushveld*. Sir Percy Fitzpatrick's trusty dog makes Lassie look like a disobedient mongrel.

Much of the cocooning of the Afrikaner past turns a blind eye to the abuses of recent history and instead lifts up the early Voortrekker families for our admiration. The same is true of other Boer landmarks in the region. The Long Tom cannon overlooking the road to Lydenburg recalls the spirit of stubborn defiance with which the Boers stalled the British Army during the Boer War. On a hilltop at the entrance to Pretoria, the massive Voortrekker monument proclaims the "heroic" passage of Boers into "their" new land, and is still a gathering point for militant rallies of the "volk" who feel increasingly marginalised in the new South Africa. Within the city, the house of Paul Kruger, trekker and founding president of the Boer Republic, is a time-capsule of a puritanical bible-thumping existence in which is written all the belligerent survivalism which kept Boers strong in their belief that they were a special case for so long.

The mountains of the Mpumalanga are an extremely popular lure for tourists, being only four hours' drive from Johannesburg. With rates of only £45 per night at even the best resort hotels – such as the Mount Sheba – it is no wonder that foreign tourists continue to flock to the area. But anyone expecting a post-1994 multicultural experience won't find it here. South Africa's tourism authorities are presently wrestling with the Republic's



Heart veiled: landscape belies the brutal Boers TONY STONE

image: "1997 is South Africa's year of cultural tourism," declares a spokesman. "It's about time we added to the beach, the bush, the sports, and share our rich culture with the rest of the world." Will this mean downgrading the emphasis on Boer history in the country's beautiful places? "Not exactly, but we'll be trying to correct the balance and bring African culture more into view."

In the meantime, don't be put off if you find yourself confronted by the ghosts of apartheid when going in search of scenic beauty in the hills. Though the history on show is definitely Boer, it is not necessarily boring. Afrikaner hero Louis Botha, a guerrilla commander

admired by both sides in the Boer War, followed a realistic philosophy: "To defeat your enemy, you must first get to know him." A journey through these golden hills can provide a rare insight into the Afrikaner character: stubborn self-reliance, entrenchment in isolation, and a chosen-race mentality that many feel aggrieved at having to explain to others now that their fortunes have changed.

The Boer may be in the dock as never before, but his story is nevertheless integral to understanding anything about the new South Africa. The trip, however, would be even more illuminating if the forgotten history of the black majority were on show as well.

## NEXT WEEK IN THE INDEPENDENT

### MONDAY JOHN REDWOOD

What is it like to meet John Redwood? The answer is – slightly more peculiar than you ever imagined and slightly more amusing, says Deborah Ross

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# Cine city

**Days out: Emma Houghton and her family travelled to France for a slice of reel life**

It is no surprise that the French coined the term "avant-garde". Futuroscope, the Poitiers-based theme park devoted to the moving image, brings together all the cutting-edge techniques of the cinema and houses them in the kind of futuristic buildings that many modern architects would be hard pushed to build.

But there's no time to stop and gaze at the jungle of organ pipes or the giant black-glass crystal that dominates this weird landscape. The park has 20 more animated visual gimmicks, including a screen the size of a seven-storey building, a dome-shaped cinema which uses liquid crystal goggles to give its images the illusion of solidity, and an under-floor screen which creates the uncanny impression of being airborne. There is also a giant 3D cinema, an enormous domed screen which gives its fish-eye film an extraordinary breadth of vision, and the synchronised seats of the simulators that deliver all the thrill of a humpy ride with none of the spills.

#### The visitors

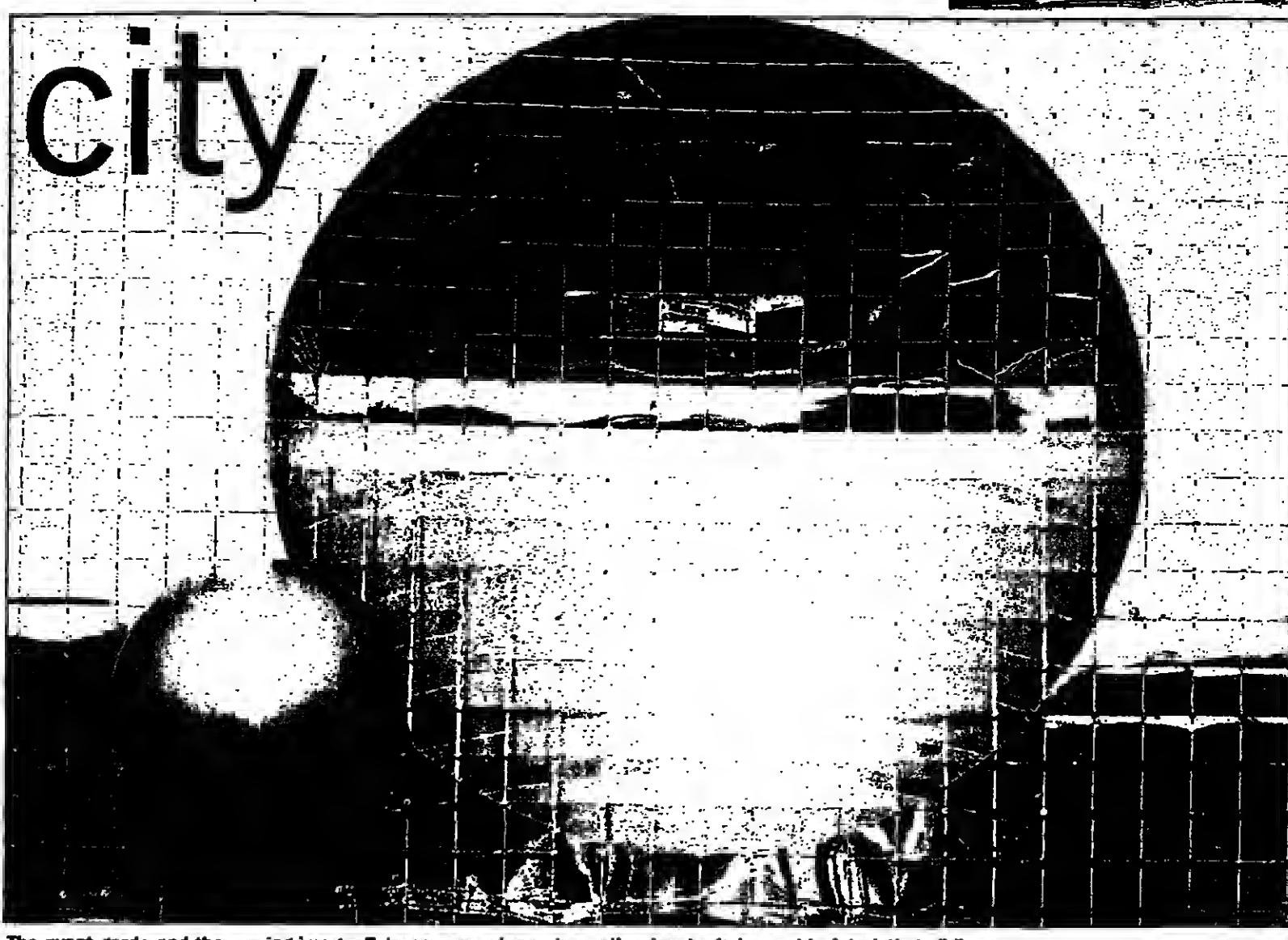
Emma Houghton, a freelance writer, and Jonathan Rees, supply teacher, went to Futuroscope with their sons: Joshua, six, Flan, four, and Zachary, two.

**Joshua:** The space film was boring because Daddy forgot to get headphones and I didn't know any of the French. I liked the moving cinemas even though I wasn't allowed on the seats. I had to sit on the steps to watch the film, but it was still good.

The Imax 3D was really realistic. You put on these glasses and it was like being in the room or the aeroplane with them. It was really close, but if you took the glasses off it looked all fuzzy. I thought the magic carpet was quite realistic too - you feel like you are floating through the air. In another film you really feel like you are going through space.

**Flan:** There were lots of the cinemas, but only one was boring. In one film if you took the glasses off the people had two heads, but if you put them on they only had one. There was another one where the cinema pretended to be on the ceiling. It had a big round roof where we saw the film. I hated that one because it was too long, but I liked the hits where you see all the little stars and big stars coming out into space and then coming back again to the earth. I didn't know space looked like that. That cinema was good too, because I was sitting above Mummy and I could lean down and say 'I love you'.

**Jonathan:** I was very impressed with all the effects,



The avant-garde and the moving image: Futuroscope, where cinematic wizardry is housed in futuristic buildings

PHOTOGRAPH: SYGMA

but could have done without the lengthy introductions beforehand. They would appeal to real cinema enthusiasts, but I wanted to be thrilled rather than informed. While the kids did enjoy themselves, I think the language difference and sophistication of most of the films makes it more suitable for older families.

My favourite was the Omnimax dome, where the film was shown all round you. It was very intimate, you felt very involved, although it did make me feel a bit sick. I thought the 3D cinema was especially good for the indoor shots - you really felt like you were in the room with them but I found the story itself a bit dull. At the end of the day I would rather watch a good film on the telly than lots of special effects.

**Emma:** Even though we went mid-week and off-season, there were the inevitable queues. I found the waiting laborious, but judging by the barriers snaking across the entrance to the simulators, the 30 minutes I endured was nothing. The rides themselves were great fun, suffering from incurable vertigo, I would never go near a rollercoaster, so it was wonderful to experience

all of the sensations with none of the anxiety. Sadly, our day was marred by the attitude of many of the staff. After all his patient queuing Joshua proved to be a centimetre too short for the simulators and was rather brusquely ordered to sit on the floor, and there were a number of other instances when the French idea of hospitality left much to be desired. When you've paid £50 for a day's entertainment, you feel entitled to a little US-style obsequiousness.

Nevertheless, I had a wonderful time. I'd expected an assault on the senses rather than the emotions, but ultimately found the films rather than the technology made it a day to remember. Many of the images were achingly beautiful: the giant screen filled with millions of gorgeous Monarch butterflies and the panoramic view of the developing universe projected all around us were unforgettable.

#### The deal

Getting there: By road, the journey from Calais to Futuroscope takes roughly six hours; take the RN10 or A10 autoroute and leave at exit 28. By train the journey takes 90 minutes from Paris on the TGV -

for 40 francs you can take a shuttle to the park. Alternatively Poitiers-Biard airport is just 10 minutes away. Admission charges for a one-day pass vary from 140 francs (about £14.70) for adults and 110 francs (about £11.50) for children (5-16) off-season, to 180 francs for adults and 145 francs for children during weekends and summer months. Since there's a lot to pack into one day, this seems fairly good value for money. As part of the park's 10th anniversary celebration, 10-year-olds are currently admitted free.

**Facilities:** There are five reasonably priced restaurants and three cafeterias, although you can also bring in your own food. **Advice:** Plan carefully beforehand to fit the main attractions into one day - many films are shown at set times and some are over an hour long. Measure your kids carefully: the 120cm height restriction for the simulators is rigorously enforced. Guard your translation headphones like your life, especially if you leave your passports as deposit: when Flan's headphones disappeared with a neighbouring child we had to get *des scribes* with an official to recover our passports without the threatened 1,000-franc bill.

## Are we nearly there?

### Hands-on museums for Museum Week

**London Transport Museum: Covent Garden, London WC2 (0171-379 6344)** As the capital's transport becomes ever more automated, this could soon be the only place where you can drive a tube train or a bus. A new fun bus, designed for the under-8s, is scheduled to arrive on 24 May. Open daily 10am-6pm (Fridays from 11am). Adults £4.50, children £2.50, under-5s free.

**The Skyview Experience, Gatwick Airport, West Sussex (01293 535353)** The roof of the airport's South Terminal is topped out by a Handley-Page Herald to clamber about upon, plus a range of other aviation-linked paraphernalia including a flight simulator. Open daily, 7am-7pm. Adults £2.95, children £2, family ticket (two adults plus two children) £6. If you only have time for the viewing gallery, prices are adults £1, children 60p.

**The Exploratory Hands-on Science Centre, Temple Meads, Bristol (0117-907 5000)** The principles of science, from light to gravity, as you've never seen them before. Open daily, 10am-5pm. Adults £5, children £3, family ticket (two adults, two children) £15.

**Museum of the Moving Image, Waterloo Bridge, SE1 (0171-401 2636)** Fly like Superman or read the news like Trevor McDonald. Until 15 May, includes an exhibition on the history of video games. Open 10am-6pm daily. Adults £5.95, children £4, family ticket (two adults, two children) £16.

**National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Prince's View, Bradford (01274 727488)** The original, and still the greatest, home of the image - both still and moving. Open 10am-6pm daily (except on Mondays during school term-time), admission free.

**Museum of Science and Technology, Manchester (0161-832 2244)** In the manufacturing heart of the city where the Industrial Revolution picked up speed, the MST traces everything from the cotton trade to the hot-air system that pumped energy around the city. Open 10am-5pm daily. Adults £5, children £3.

## Upstairs, downstairs and in my lady's washroom

**Jonathan Sale dips into some kitchen culture with a look behind the doors of four National Trust homes**

Stately homes have traditionally played up their Upstairs and played down their Downstairs. Knoles, for example, the splendid National Trust property near Sevenoaks in Kent, is something of an iceberg for visitors - for three-quarters of it, including the impressive kitchen area, is as hidden as the bones of the Yeoman of the Pastry who once worked there. But the National Trust has just published *Behind the Scenes: Domestic Arrangements in Historic Houses* (£24.99) in which Christina Hardyment cele-

brates the intriguing world of the Mrs Bridgeses and the Mr Hudsons whose labours kept the stately homes stately. Here are four properties, recommended in the book, which specialise in such family attractions. Apart from Wimpole Home Farm, entrance is free to NT members

**Townend, Troutbeck, Windermere, Cumbria (015934 32628)** Open 1-5pm Tues-Fri, Sun and Bank Holiday Monday. Admission: £2.70, children £1.30, family £7. The home of Lake District "yeomen" or gentlemen farmers, this has been preserved in something of a time-war since the Brownie family left in 1947 - and the basic structure remains much the same as it was when the house was put up three centuries before that. It boasts the "earliest and most complete of fitted kitchens", according to Christina Hardyment.

One of the most modern gadgets is the pre-war, hand-powered washing machine in the washhouse. Even now there are few electric lights, which is why the property closes early when the nights draw in. Servants had their own little staircase with rooms off, where you can see their bedclothes rumpled and a nightgown left out. As the Children's Discovery Sheet points out, the legs on the bed in the master bedroom were carefully trimmed to compensate for the Alpine slope of the floor. Otherwise, Downstairs rubbed shoulders cosily with Upstairs at Townend. It

also rubbed the dark woodwork: today, waxing is a three-month programme left until the property is closed in the winter.

**Lanhydrock, Bodmin, Cornwall (01208 73320)** Open 11am-5.30pm Tues-Sun and Bank Holiday Monday. Admission: £5, family ticket £15. Grounds only £3. It is one of the few stately homes to have been dynamited, in an attempt to make a firebreak when most of the origi-

**Time for a pitstop**  
Places that positively welcome children: Bumble, 2 Charles Street, Wrexham, Chwyd (01978 355023). All-day snacks are the stock-in-trade of this popular spot above the gift shop of the same name. Following morning special of biscuits, tea cakes, scones and pies, the choice gets more savoury - with jacket potatoes, salads, rarebits and ploughman's platters (£2.99 each). Bumble-blend tea with Welsh tea cakes (£1.35) remains a favourite afternoon choice, while assorted cakes, meringues and pies sit temptingly in the display cabinet. Children's portions available. Open 9am-5pm. Closed Sun.

From Egon Ronay's *Guide... and Children Come Too* (Bookman, £9.99)

nal 17th-century house went up in flames in 1881. It was replaced by what to the Victorians counted as a more "modest" building.

The 43 rooms open to the public take a good 90 minutes to wander through. Their names indicate the sheer scale of the staffing: the Nursery Bathroom, with scales and rule to record the vital statistics of the young Masters and Misses; the Nanny's Bedroom, near the Night Nursery for the younger children; the Men's Staircase, next to the luggage lift for heavy trunks; the Footmen's Livery Room, where uniforms were cleaned; and the Linen Lobby for clean bedclothes.

**Erdlig, Wrexham, Chwyd (01978 355314)** Open 12-5pm (house) 11am-6pm (garden) Sat-Wed. Adults £5.40, children £2.70, family £13.50. Below-stairs and gardens only, adults £3.60, children £1.80, family £9. "The most evocative Upstairs Downstairs house in Britain", according to the NT. The eccentric Yorke family had an unusual relationship with their staff: all stately homes have portraits of their owners; Erdlig has pictures and poems celebrating the servants too.

High point of your tour is the tall shower in the bathroom; this late-19th-century portable version sprinkles water from a small tank above the user, who can then pump it up again and recycle it. One of the watercolours on the wall shows the shower in full flow. Before its

installation in what was probably a servant's bedroom, bathing took place in hip-baths in front of bedroom fires. Before that the family ablutions took place in the Bath House in the park.

**Wimpole Home Farm, Arrington, nr Royston, Hertfordshire (01223 207257)** 10.30am-5pm, Tue-Thur, and Sat & Sun, plus Bank Holiday Monday; daily in July and August. Adults £4, children £2.50. Note that National Trust members pay: adults £2, children £1. (This does not

include Wimpole Hall, the adjacent National Trust property which boasts servants' quarters, including butler's pantry and steward's room, unchanged since the 19th century.)

Wimpole was set up 200 years ago as a model farm, and its Great Barn, housing historical agricultural machinery, was designed by Sir John Soane. The Home Farm celebrates not just Downstairs but Outdoors as well. Events include Children's Days on 26 May and 25 August with rare breeds on show and horse-and-cart rides.



Close up of the 'close range' at the kitchen in Lanhydrock



Erdlig kitchen

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We also visit the Maasai people.

Tanzania: Night 3: Arusha - bustling town.

Night 4: Tarangire - game drives in

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Night 5: Ngorongoro Crater - extinct

volcanic crater filled with game including

elephant, black rhino, lion &amp; cheetah.

Night 6: Arusha. Night 7: Mt.

Kilimanjaro. Night 8: Dar es Salaam - run

down but atmospheric Swahili city on the

Indian Ocean. Night 9-11: Zanzibar - the

spice island with an arabic influence.

Spice tour. Night 12: Mikumi N.P. - game

drives in a park which is home to most

species of East Africa's large game. Night

13: Mbeya.

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and still, but instead of pressing on to the open countryside, you suddenly find yourself in someone's driveway. A 10ft wall and a wrought-iron gate, overlooked by a family house, blocks the route. You'll have to go a different way if you want that pint.

This experience is every ramblers' nightmare. The map says where the footpaths should be, but they are obstructed. In this case, the wall was erected only in the past few years and a battle between walkers and the homeowner ensues. In others, a farmer may have erected a barbed-wire fence or you encounter a field of rape which is impassable without wielding a large machete. Or the old path along the edge of the field has been ploughed up, leaving a deep ditch as your only remaining route.

Next weekend, the Ramblers' Association will be out in force, holding a "Free Your Paths Weekend" in an attempt to stop such abuses, which, says the association, make it difficult or impossible to use a quarter - 35,000 miles in all - of the public footpaths in England and Wales. Ramblers will be scaling walls and fences and walking through over-cropped fields, reclaiming their rights of way.

But they know that they will win these skirmishes because the law is on their side. What really excites them now is the chance that the Blair Government gives them to extend their rights well beyond the footpaths - to boldly go where no ramblar has gone, legally, before.

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# It's not just a question of pot luck

**Gardening: Anna Pavord on the best plants for tubs and troughs**

Putting a plant in a pot has the same effect as putting a frame round a picture. It focuses the eye and sets the object apart. Neither pots nor frames should overwhelm. If you have a pot of decided character, it may be more satisfactory to let it stand alone. Filling it with flowers could be as indigestible as cramming two puddings into one lunch.

Pots provide a quick-fix solution to several gardening problems. They allow you to grow plants in places such as balconies and roof gardens that have never had a sniff of real soil. At ground level, where earth may have been supplanted by concrete and tarmac, well-planted pots give an illusion of fecundity and growth.

You can also use them to give instant lift to borders. This is how I use lilies. I mostly lose them if I plant the bulbs in the ground. I suspect small black keeled slugs are the problem. Planted in pots, the lilies bulk up and prosper and can then be plunged into the middle of patches where less is happening than it should be.

Pots are also dangerously addictive, as anyone who has them will already know. One on its own acts as a magnet, for they are by nature clusterers. And what better to set off a fine fuchsia in a pot than a clutch of other pots round its base, filled with a complementary mixture of pelargoniums, helichrysums or the blue daisy flowers of felicia.

This is one way you can get round the problem of not having pots that are big enough, on their own, for mixed plantings. The watering is more difficult, as smaller pots dry out very much more quickly than big ones. But sempervivums (the round flat fleshy rosettes called house leeks), which do not like competition from other plants, are best grown on their own in small, low pots. Then they can be grouped with succulents such as waxy aeoniums and pots of laurentia.

Laurentia - like felicia - is a container plant that has suddenly come out of nowhere fast. I grew it in pots last year, partly because I liked the blue, star-shaped flowers, but also because the foliage is so good. It is dark and deeply cut. The disadvantage is that the plants, left to themselves, are very slow to come into flower. It was August before they made anything of themselves. Full grown plants, bought at a garden centre, will have been pushed on faster than I pushed my plants, which were set outside in mid-May.

Cunning gardeners, with greenhouses and conservatories at their disposal, start making up their pots under cover in mid-April so that by the time they go out, the plants are well advanced in growth. But you need a trailer or a strong back, or both, to shift them from the inside out. You also need a lucky break with the weather. Plants grown inside develop in a softer, fleshier way than they do outside, where hail, heavy rain and wind can tear them to bits.

Paul Williams, who plants up fabulous pots in the garden at Bourton House, Bourton-on-the-Hill, Gloucestershire, always uses plenty of good foliage in his containers. That, more than flowers, he says, is what makes them look rich and exotic. With a rich abutilon, such as 'Ashford Red' he uses cannas, sprawling bidens, which like laurentia, has excellent foliage, and then adds a few more unusual touches, such as pale apricot Mimulus aurantiacus and orange-red cigar flowers (Cypripedium ignea).

On its own, the mimulus is a scrappy grower, but thrown in a mellee with other plants, its straggling habit is disguised and you can admire it extravagantly for its strangely coloured flowers. It is very good with the acid-coloured helichrysus 'Lime-light', but helichrysus is one of the top 10 plants for containers, good with most things. Sometimes it tries to swamp. Then you need to be ready with scateurs to stop it taking over. 'Lime-light' is better in



Leafy ideals: abutilon and mimulus produce good foliage for a well planted pot

CLIVE NICHOLS (BOURTON HOUSE)

shade than in sun, when it tends to scorch.

Begonias are not most people's first thought for containers, but Paul Williams uses them brilliantly. He's particularly fond of B. sunderlandii, a South African species with long, slender trailing stems, and lopsided bright green leaves, often veined with red. The flowers are small, but they are produced in hanging bunches, the same smudgy, chalky shade of apricot orange as the mimulus. Both look good

I'm also very keen on Begonia fuchsioides. Its name tells you what to expect. It's a begonia pretending to be a fuchsia. It can grow up to three feet tall, with strong, reddish coloured stems. The foliage is tiny and very glossy. And the foliage is all you will get, if you use this as a container plant, for the flowers come during the winter, hanging panicles of pink and white.

Because its habit is so upright, B. fuchsioides, like the abutilon 'Ashford Red',

is best used as a centrepiece in a bigish pot, with other plants grouped around it. Try it with scrambling silver-leaved Convolvulus altheoides and the ever-obliging lobelia, another of the container top 10. The 'Cascade' series of lobelias is first choice for hanging baskets, but it is equally good in pots too, dripping out over the sides to give the feeling of abundance that is the keynote of all the best planted pots.

Another Williams trademark is the use

of herbaceous perennials in containers. Crocosmia, for instance. It's a not a good choice for planting in a pot, but it points out, the sword-shaped foliage does the same job as the New Zealand flax phormium. The flowers, at the other end of the spectrum, blend nasturtiums swirling around below.

You are also more used to seeing the striped grass, Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola' in borders than in pots, but like all grasses, it has great grace and can be used as an arching centrepiece in a bigish pot. The stripes are bright green and yellow, so you need to think carefully about what is to go with it. White is safe, and the underplanting could be of white-flowered petunias. Alternatively, you could build on the yellow note, and add daisy-flowered Coreopsis verticillata, either lemon yellow 'Moonbeam' or the usefully drought-resistant 'Zagreb', which has rich golden-yellow flowers. The foliage is finely cut.

Mr Williams often uses another grass, Molinia caerulea 'Variegata', in pots. It's taller than the striped bakonechloa, and the spiky flowering heads are held well above the foliage, which is, again, striped, but much more subdued than bakonechloa. If you like subdued plantings, use it with purple-leaved clover (Trifolium repens 'Purpureum Quadrifidum'). If you think it needs lightening up, plant it with variegated felicia or blue-and-white nemesia. The oddly named nemesia 'KLM' (Thompson and Morgan £1.69) would be ideal.

For more planting ideas for tubs, hanging baskets and window boxes, see Paul Williams's new book 'Creative Containers' (Conran Octopus, £12.99). The garden at Bourton House, Bourton-on-the-Water is open every Thursday and Friday from 29 May to 24 October (12-5pm). Admission £2.50. Good pots are available from S & B Evans, 7a Esna St (just off Columbia Rd) London E2 7RH, open Fridays (9am-5pm) and Sundays (9am-1.30pm). Other times by appointment, call 0171-729 6635.



CUTTINGS

Osborne House, Queen Victoria's beloved home on the Isle of Wight, is open tomorrow (10am-6pm) in aid of the National Gardens Scheme. The terraced gardens sweep down to the sea, east of Cowes, and are decorated in the Renaissance manner with wildly urnate fountains and statues. The garden made for Victoria's brood of children surrounds a Swiss

cottage. Admission (gardens only) £3.50, house and garden £6.

At the Orangery, Kenwood, another English Heritage property, you can listen to poetry and music tomorrow, as part of a celebration, The Glories of the Garden, which starts at 7.30pm. Tickets (£7-14) from Ticketmaster on 0171-413 1443.

Water-storing polymers have proved their worth over the last couple of blazing, dry summers. You mix them with compost and they hang on to water better than the best-trained camel. Available from Greenacres Horticultural Supplies, PO Box 1228, Iwer, Bucks (01895 835235), price £4.20 for 12g or £7 for 250g.

## Weekend work

If you lose control of weeds now, you will not catch up for the rest of the season. Do some determined slaughtering amongst the groundsel (already in flower and planning a population explosion), speedwell and dandelion tribes. Keep a small handspray of herbicide on the go (Roundup is the one I favour as it does least harm to the soil) to zap bindweed. This has just started a stealthy takeover bid among the soft fruit.

The dry April has held back much seed-sowing, especially of hardy annuals which I had hoped to sow direct. Instead they are beginning life in the more comfortable environs of the kitchen window sill. Prick out seedlings as soon as they are big enough to handle, setting them up to their necks in seed trays of fresh compost. But Escholtzia lobbia 'Moonlight' (Mr Fothergill 95p) is being sown direct into the newly damp soil.

Mulch furiously with whatever you can get hold of. This is your best insurance against drought. It also improves soil structure. I am a mulch-bore, but do not apol-

gise for it. There is always controversy over whether or not you can use lawn mowings as a mulch. Since we use no chemicals on the lawn, our mowings are tipped straight on to the soft-fruit patch and spread between the currant and gooseberry bushes. I think they do a good job. The disadvantage is that any mulch encourages bindweed.

Continue to keep an eye on Clematis shoots which are growing with staggering vigour. Keep them fanned out to avoid them tangling with each other in a bunch. Clematis like cool feet and warm heads. A thick mulch (here we go again) or a slab of stone on top of the earth will help to keep the roots cool.

Sow sweetcorn if you have a warm, sheltered spot outside, setting the seeds in a square block about 18in apart each way. Plant out celery in trenches. They like rich rations, so under the trench there should be lashings of muck. They will also need a great deal of water.

Anna Pavord

## gardening

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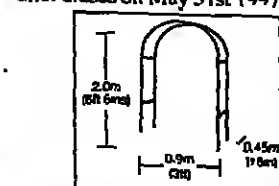
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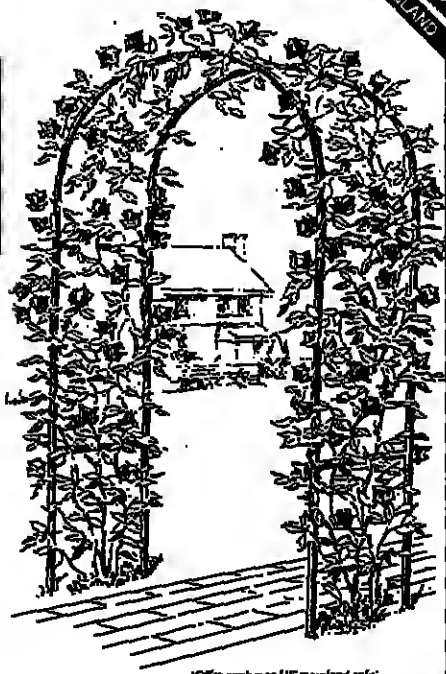
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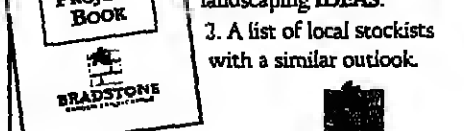
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## Little to grouse about

We drove out through ancient pinewood made magical by a slow and wintry dawn. Fresh snow had coated the heather with silver, and through the black canopy of the forest the foothills of the Cairngorms gleamed like smooth, white pillows as they climbed away towards a leaden sky.

No matter that reveille on Thursday had been at 4am. Nothing could damp the anticipation of 30-odd visitors who sallied forth at first light into the 32,000 acres of the Abernethy Forest Reserve on Speyside. Guests of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, we set off in small parties heading for 12 separate leks – the open spaces on which black grouse congregate to conduct their arcane mating rituals.

In command of my group was Desmond Dugan, one of the RSPB rangers. As he drove, he described how the blackcocks take up position on grassy patches to display to their females, the greytails.

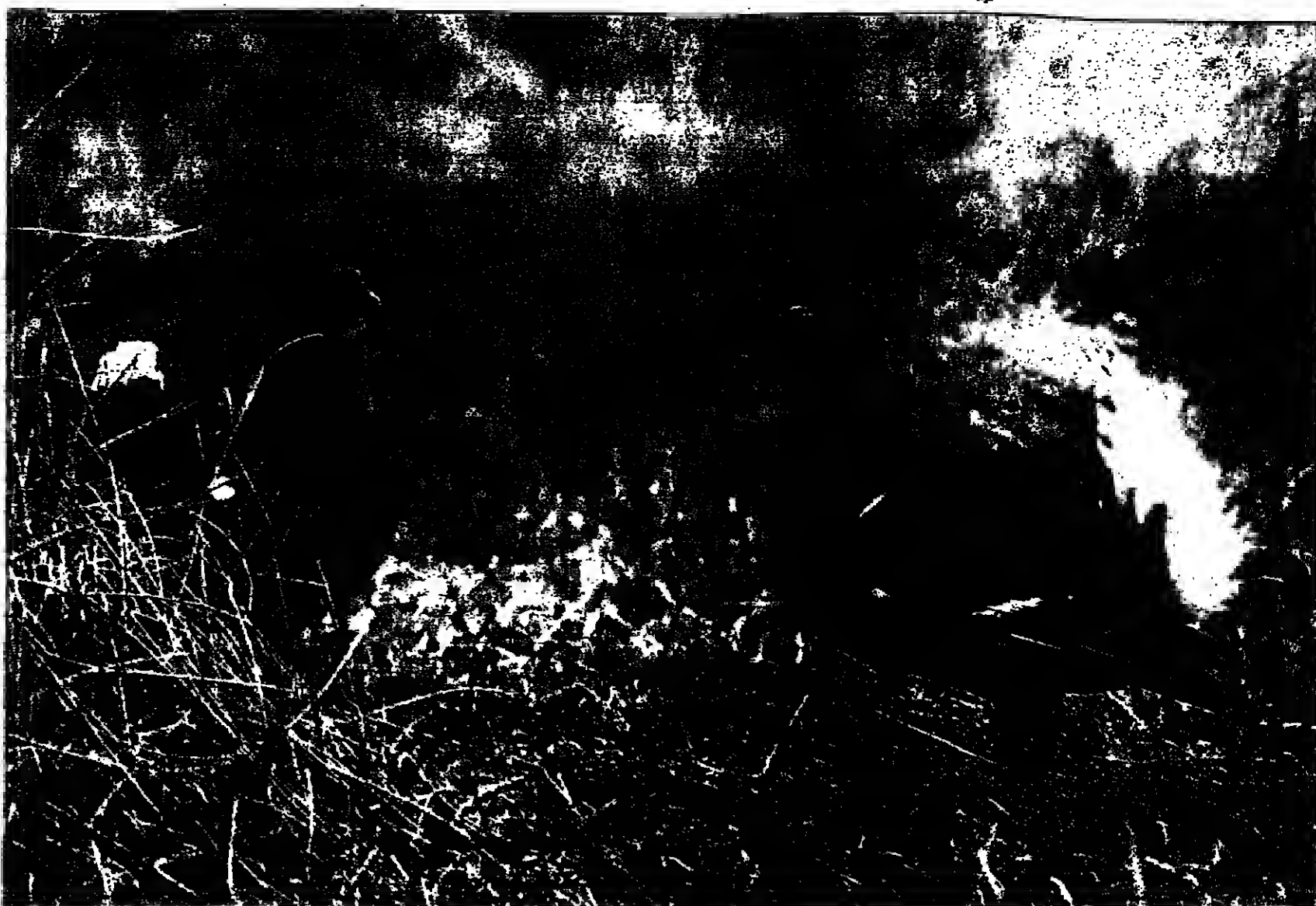
Leaving the Land-Rover, we ploughed through snow-crusted heather to a vantage-point under some pines – and there below us business was in full swing. Desmond called the flat area a "green", but the return of winter had made it a "white", and on that pale background 28 hefty black birds showed up perfectly. The alpha, or dominant, cocks were occupying centre stage, as younger birds manoeuvred for position further out.

With scarlet wattles above the eyes, lyre-shaped tails curling outwards at the end, and patches of snowy white feathers splashed about their anatomy, the big fellows were indisputably handsome – but they weren't half making fools of themselves. Strutting, posturing, puffing out the air-sacs in their chests, fluffing up their tail-coverts, they threw dignity to the winds in their efforts to impress potential wives.

Of these, there was scarcely a sign. We felt sure plenty were watching from round about, but we saw only one. Maybe some had been mated already. Maybe it was just too cold for the rest. As Desmond remarked, "Who'd take their trousers down on a morning as cold as this?"

For this Woodland Grouse Management Day arranged by the RSPB, landowners and lairds, farmers, foresters, scientists, bird specialists and others had gathered from far and wide. And by the time we returned to the lodge at 7.30am, we were much impressed. The total of blackcocks seen amounted to 190 – more than four times the number recorded at the first surveys here in 1989.

This rosy picture presents a sharp contrast with developments elsewhere. In every other part of their range, in Wales, northern England and Scotland, blackgame are declining or barely holding their own. In Perthshire, their traditional stronghold, numbers have fallen by



Throwing dignity to the winds: black grouse congregate to conduct their arcane mating rituals

PHOTOGRAPHS: DESMOND OUGAN

**Country:** Radical action, including the culling of deer, has ensured that endangered birds are thriving in Speyside, reports Duff Hart-Davis

more than 50 per cent during the past seven years. Yet on the Abernethy reserve there are now more birds than on all the other 17 sporting estates in the region.

The success is due to the enlightened policy developed by the RSPB over the past 20 years. In buying the estate, the Society's aim was to conserve and if possible expand one of the surviving remnants of the Caledonian forest, which once covered much of the Highlands. Conservation of the forest would, it was hoped, ensure the well-being of its key bird species – among them capercaillie, black grouse, Scottish crossbill and crested tit.

The main threat to the trees came from red deer, which were browsing off seedlings with such efficiency that there was no chance of any natural regeneration. The RSPB therefore took the controversial step of carrying out a drastic cull.

The resulting changes have been spectacular. Not only are seedling pines surviving by the thousand, so that the edges

of the forest are creeping outwards on to the flanks of the hills. During the same period, the ground vegetation has become more lush, providing better habitat for black grouse and caper. In many places the heather and bilberry are two feet deep.

Unlike red grouse, which live on open heather moors, black grouse are birds of the moorland and woodland edge, and thrive in a mixture of tree cover and open glades. Adults eat tree-buds and shoots of heather, but in the first few weeks of life their chicks need a high proportion of protein in the form of insects. This makes blueberry bushes, which harbour caterpillars and other invertebrates, especially valuable.

Another fact established by recent research is that the wire fences built to exclude deer from new plantations are a major cause of mortality among both black grouse and caper. Birds are particularly at risk when they come off their roost in the dark before dawn and glide down to feeding or lekking areas. Experi-

ments have shown that fatal collisions are much reduced if wires are decorated with orange netting to make them more visible. But the best expedient is to remove the fences altogether.

This is what the RSPB has done at Abernethy. In the past few years 25 miles of two-metre-high fences have been ripped out, and it seems certain that the elimination of this major hazard has helped the blackgame recover.

For the past century at least, sporting considerations have been paramount in many parts of the Highlands: deer and deer-stalking have come first, trees a poor second. Now other famous forests – Rothiemurcus, Mar Lodge, Glenfeshie – are going down the Abernethy road, reducing deer numbers and removing fences. In none of these places is the aim to exterminate the deer; rather, the plan is to maintain smaller herds, and to give the trees priority. This dynamic shift of policy should certainly benefit woodland grouse over a wide area – especially if the ideas and methods discussed at Abernethy on Thursday are exported into other estates.

After our early foray, experts analysed the results obtained by the RSPB so far, and outlined possible future conservation initiatives. A talk by Dr Robert Moss, formerly of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, emphasised the precarious state of

the capercaillie population in Scotland as a whole.

Most people believe that capers became extinct in Scotland during the 18th century; other specialists feel sure that a few birds survived. Either way, fresh stocks were introduced from Scandinavia to Tayside in 1837; and after a slow build-up, they flourished so strongly in eastern Scotland that by the 1920s they were regarded as a menace to forestry. Until the 1970s they continued to do well, but in the past 10 years they have gone into steep decline, numbers falling from 20,000 to barely a tenth of that.

Through catching poult and fitting them with radios, scientists have discovered that young adult caper cover astonishing distances, apparently in search of somewhere to live. Hens, especially, may travel up to 20 miles from their place of birth, and this makes it clear that future schemes for habitat management will have to cover very large areas.

By the time we dispersed from Abernethy on Thursday, everyone had become infected by the enthusiasm with which the RSPB rangers spoke of their charges. If you throw in the fact that, besides black grouse and caper, we saw red grouse, several hundred red deer, golden eagles, curlew, goldeneye and tufted duck, mallard and red-throated divers, you can imagine that we had a pretty good day.

## In the shadow of Mount Snowdon

While tourists flock to the highest peak in Wales, progress is killing the communities that live there. Roger Dobson reports

Sam Roberts and Snowdonia folk call the tiny piles of grey dust on the summit the summer snow. These small heaps which rest briefly on the bare rocks before being swept away by the relentless winds are the mortal remains of climbers, walkers and other visitors who fell in love with Snowdon and whose last wish was to have their ashes scattered here.

"And why not indeed? I cannot think of a better place to be laid to rest," says Sam, a Snowdon warden who has walked these hills as man and boy.

Further along the craggy stone ridge are two small, wind-torn bunches of fading flowers, an offering to mark the spot where a climber fell to his death some years ago.

Hundreds of feet below this poignant reminder of how dangerous Snowdon can be

are coaches spilling out day trippers from Birmingham, Liverpool and further afield. In a lay-by far beneath the peaks, they queue for service at a convoy of ice-cream vans and cold drinks vendors. Across the road, some mountain hikers are getting ready, and a group of fell runners make their final preparations. Cars with hang-gliders strapped to roofs are arriving, and half a dozen pony trekkers trot past.

For most of the 500,000 annual visitors like these to Snowdon, the highest point in England and Wales, the mountain and its foothills are a vast leisure park for recreation, enjoyment, walking and sight-seeing. But behind the picture-postcard images of Snowdonia there are hidden and darker sides to this community in the clouds.

There are the old villages like Deiniolen which is wrestling with the problems of poverty and unemployment. And nestled in the folds of the hills are more communities devastated by the high unemployment that came with the closure of slate mines that were once the biggest in the world, employing up to 3,000 men each. These communities are also plagued by the problems of their young who have to move away from these Welsh-speaking heartlands to get work and a home of their own.

Away from the six tourist trails that converge on the summit like motorways on a city, there are the hard lives of people like shepherd John Lewis, whose family have kept sheep on Cadair Idris for more than a century. His daily life is a series of battles against

weather, walkers and wardens.

This hidden side of Snowdonia has been captured on film by Graham Johnston for a six-part BBC2 documentary which takes a look at the area through the eyes of the people who live and work there – and who cope with day-to-day problems that are unseen by the hordes of tourists.

It is not just as a warden that Sam Roberts is passionate about his mountain. "I look out here as a fine lady who is often mistreated by all these people who walk all over her without being really invited. The lady is letting you enjoy her company for a while and if you respect her, everything will be all right."

"We do get a lot of visitors and people do complain that the roads get blocked with cars and people. What I say to them is that we are fortunate enough to live in paradise for 365 days a year, surely we can put up with these people coming here for just a few weeks a year."

"I have a sadness for people who cannot appreciate such beauty – and a sadness, too, for the loss of life that occurs and which is a constant reminder of how ruthless the mountain can be if you don't respect her."

Debbie Williams, meanwhile, is bringing her family up in Deiniolen, a community that has suffered with the loss of slate mining and two thirds of its population are without a job.

"We are forgotten about; we lead nowhere. Villages that are in the tourist areas get everything, we don't get a thing. There is nothing here any more – people don't want to live here. The High Street is like a slum," she says.

Older people in the village, which is littered with boarded-up shops, recall the prosperous days of full employment.

"Everything was orderly in those days," says one former slate miner. "On Monday the wife used to wash all the dirty clothes; Tuesday was drying day and a time for baking loaves; on Wednesday there was all the ironing, and on Thursday they would be doing the cakes for Sunday, with apple tarts and wineber-

ries. Every day was something special."

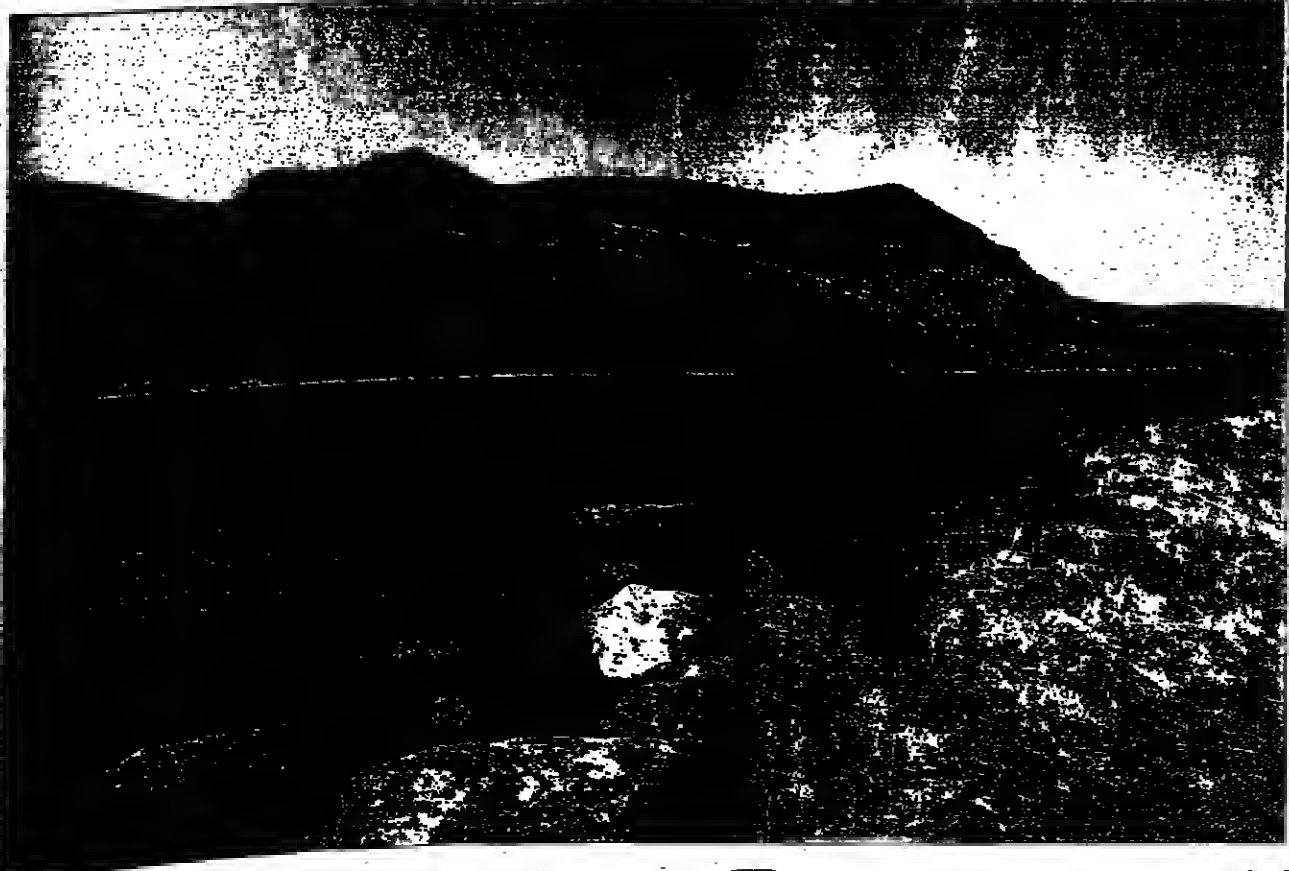
The area has attracted its share of incomers, too. Clyde Holmes has lived in the remote Cwm Hysgyn valley for 25 years.

"It is wonderful to bring a family up here. Children always appreciate a certain amount of freedom generally and that is what they had here. The usual stresses and strains don't appear so much. As they get older, of course, the chil-

dren want to widen their horizons and in their teens it is not so ideal."

Clyde has spent years painting different views of the remote valley. "Look at the mountains, how eternal they are. We humans are just a pinprick really. When you live here there is a sense that everything around you will always be here."

"Visions of Snowdonia" begins on BBC2, Friday 16 May at 8pm



Behind the picture postcard image of Snowdonia is a community plagued by problems

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# all consuming

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Wit, brevity and surrealism – the ingredients of a good spot cartoon. John Windsor hopes to find the lot at Cartoon 97

A new ingredient is being added to newspaper and magazine cartoons – laughter. While the editorial-page political lampoon, the stout party of cartooning, has collapsed under the weight of its own self-importance, "spot gags", those unpretentious single-frame page-fillers, have become spicier and funnier.

The election saw a turgid landslide of newspaper editorial cartoons showing John Major in extremis – shipwrecked, or on the edge of a precipice, or like a stag at bay. The tired images seemed to be vying for corniness.

By contrast, the spot gags were a refreshing giggle – lighter, wittier, even when politically tinged. Adam Singleton in this week's *Spectator* drew a gag of a couple waking up in bed the morning after the election, captioned, "Did the landslide for you?" It said more with less ink.

Spot gags come into their own on Sunday 18 May at Chelsea Town Hall with Cartoon 97, a cartoon fair "for adults and children only", the first of its kind. Organised by the founders of the quarterly ribtickler *The Journal of Silly* – cartoonists Ham Khan ("Ham") and Duncan McCoshan ("Kerber") – its aim is to make you laugh.

About 50 leading cartoonists and dealers will be displaying their gags for sale (from £25), doing portrait caricatures (from £5) and selling old cartoons (a Heath Robinson could cost you £2,000), as well as showing how it's done in cartoon workshops, lecturing and submitting themselves for interview. There will also be a screened interview with the celebrated Ralph Steadman.

If the new wave of funnies has not yet tickled you, cast your mind back, for comparison, to the cringe-making spot gags that were daily fodder in popular tabloid newspapers right into the Eighties. Gags such as: Wife to hen-pecked husband in a pub bar, "You've had enough – you're beginning to answer me back". Were they ever funny?

According to Ham, whose work is published by the *Independent*, *Punch* and *Private Eye*, among others, gags about family stereotypes or women – women drivers, even New Women – are now beyond the pale.

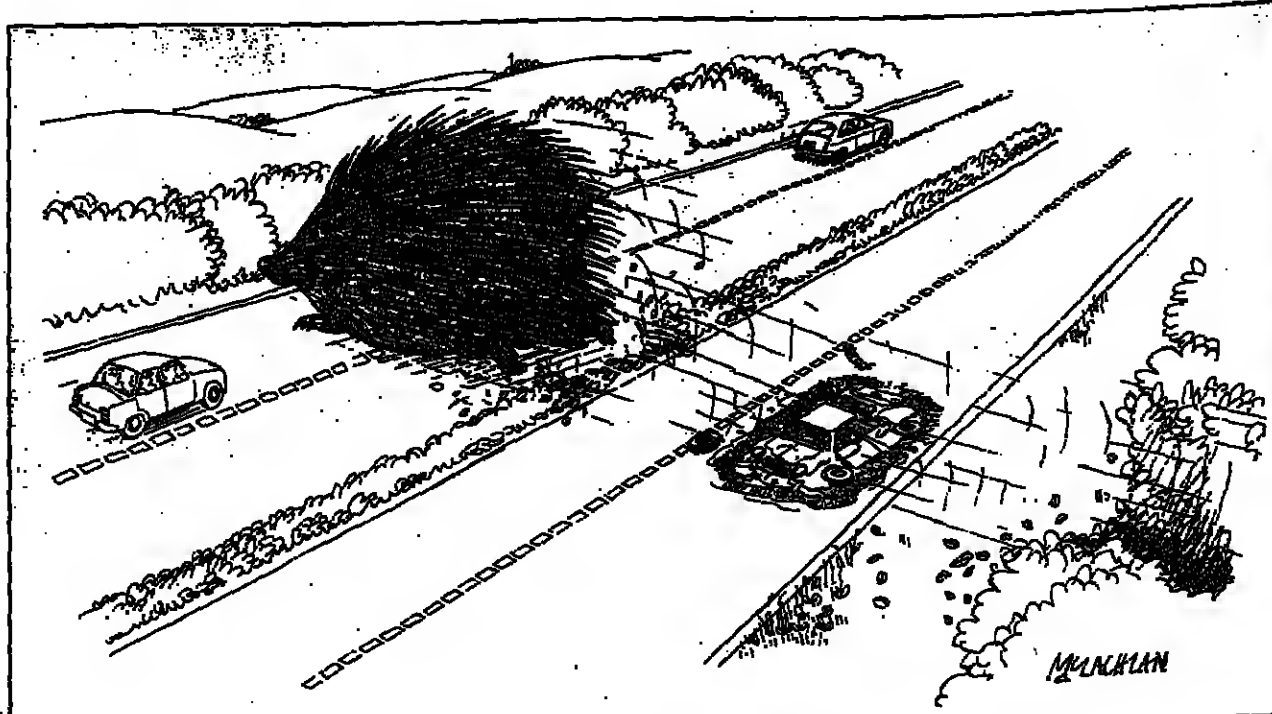
They have been ousted by lifestyle jokes, often with a surreal flavour. Take, for example, Ham's captionless drawing of a father sucking his baby through feeding bottles strapped to his chest – a striking, eloquent image that is still very silly. (New Men, it seems, are still fair game for cartoonists.)

Two surrealist time-bombs are responsible for the trend. One is Edward McLachlan's nightmarish car-squashing hedgehogs, which first lumbered into print in *Private Eye* as long ago as 1971. It was McLachlan, 57, who, after yet another dismal Test defeat, drew an England cricketer, begging on a street corner, being thrown a coin – and dropping it. You'll find nothing as comic as that on editorial pages.

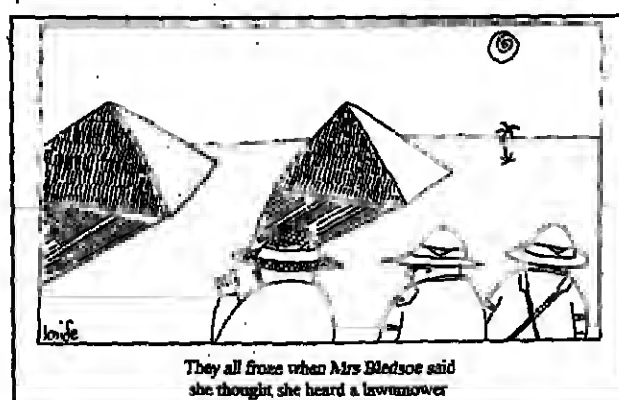
The other surrealist is the American Gary Larson, whose *The Far Side* spot gag series made its UK debut in the *Evening Standard* in 1986. His forte is juxtaposing silly humans with know-all animals. Example: two old women observe a man-sized spider at their window. "Calm down Edna... yes, it's some giant hideous insect... but it could be some giant hideous insect in need of help".

Of course, there's nothing really new where jokes are concerned. Steve Way, cartoonist and cartoon editor of *Punch*, who looks forward to meeting embittered amateur cartoonists at his question-and-answer session at the fair, points out that the surreal hippopotamus gag – one hippo to the other, "I keep thinking it's Tuesday" – first appeared in *Punch* in the Thirties.

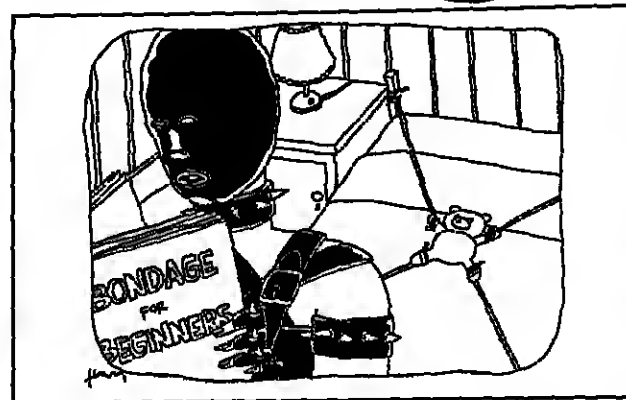
For the record, he looks for cartoons that are "edgy and topical". Such as, presumably, Jackson's in this week's issue, showing Pooh, holding a Virgin balloon, looking at a slit circled by bees high up a tree trunk. The slit is unmistakably



## Good for a laugh



They all freeze when Mrs. Bledsoe said she thought she heard a lawnmower



anatomical, and piglet is saying: "Face it, Pooh – you're never going to get that honey". It's very, very rude.

The new wave has thrown up some fresh topics that look to become as evergreen as the cartoonists' desert island. One is the advice centre or the in-store information desk – natural flashpoints for the latent rage in consumer society.

Kerber, who draws "Damen Hurts" in

the *Independent*, has a "Samuraians" advice-giver, in appropriate Oriental costume, urging, "Go and kill yourself". I prefer a version in *Hustler*, to which my attention has been drawn, in which the crew-cropped consultant on the Sodomy Information Hot-Line advises: "Stick it up your ass!". It's simpler and the twist is more unexpected.

The Samuraians gag illustrates a foible

of the new wave: the contrived pun. Simon Ellinas in *The Journal of Silly* has a man in a stetson with the speech bubble, "Hi! Pardon me!" The caption? "Wild Bill Hiccup". At least it's silly.

Michael Heath, the *Spectator's* cartoon editor, is the most prolific of cartoonists; he can't be bothered to sell his published artwork, and once put an armful of his original cartoons in a rummage box at the



Surrealist time-bombs: Edward McLachlan's car-squashing hedgehogs (left) set a trend for the founders of the *Journal of Silly*, Ham (above and below left) and Kerber (below left)

ultra-witty, late-lamented Mel Calman's London cartoon gallery, with a notice saying "Please take one". He will open the fair, which is supported by the Cartoon Art Trust, founded by Calman, and the Cartoonists' Club of Great Britain.

He will have no truck with bleatings about new waves or surrealism. "You mean 'whimsy', don't you?" he says. "All I see is cartoonists flapping about trying to make a living".

Political cartoons? "The whole thing's a mess, it's cobblers. They say it's going madly satirical. Rubbish. It's just ugly. Worms coming out of John Major's nose, that sort of thing. There's no thought behind it". But he has spotted some new young spot-gaggers: Adam Singleton (the landslide morning-after gag) and Robert Thompson, who contributed "King's Road rage" to the current issue of *Silly* – two fashionable women in a tug-of-war over a pair of slacks.

As for his own work, Heath says: "I have to dream up things all over again". Such as his Labour Ladies series in the *Daily Telegraph*. One of them has been griping that the minimum-wage policy will force her to sack her nanny. A servant joke! It's what we've all been waiting for.

Cartoon 97: Chelsea Town Hall, King's Road, London SW3, Sunday 18 May (10am-5pm) entry £1 (0181-900 2614 or 0181-341 9874).

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# Easy to wear, easy to buy



In the Eighties their hats were notorious. In the Nineties, Bernstock Spiers are back, having



reinvented themselves as designers of laid-back clothes for modern women. By Melanie Rickey. Illustrations by Thelma Spiers

Paul Bernstock and Thelma Spiers are the longest surviving partnership in British fashion. You may remember the hats for which they became notorious in the Eighties. They were worn by French and Saunders, Miranda Richardson, Jimmy Somerville, Jane Asher, Bananarama and Joseph Ettedgui (with whom they posed in seasonal catalogues), and sold across the world from New York to Tokyo.

Their business began as an accident in 1982, just after the duo graduated from the RCA. Jeff Banks (founder of the Warehouse chain) saw Thelma out shopping in a hat she had made for herself using car spray-paint and straw. He ordered hundreds – and the pair worked frantically to finish the order. However, it wasn't until Joseph Ettedgui, the great diviner of British design talent in the Eighties, ordered hats over the cloakroom counter of their cult Piccadilly nightclub, "White Trash", that a design duo was born.

Since then, Bernstock Spiers have been known primarily as milliners but they are also accessories designers, club promoters, stylists and fashion merchandisers. In 1995, they became fashion designers, and only last week Paul and Thelma entered a new phase – as retailers. TEN is the name of their first shop. It is conveniently located beneath their respective flats in Columbia Road, home to London's well-known Sunday morning flower market.

On a weekday morning, Columbia Road is virtually unrecognisable from the hustle and bustle of

the Sunday market. Instead of hollering market traders, the eerily quiet street is patrolled by the occasional model heading to an appointment, or young mums with their children. "The first Sunday we opened I saw my street in a totally different way – huge trees and shrubs bobbed past the windows all morning," says Thelma who has lived above the shop for nine years. The shop is typically East End: old wooden floors; brocade couches covered in comfy cushions, rails of clothes suspended by ancient ladders and curtain poles on pulleys.

Their clothes, they say, have been awaiting realisation for some time. The first collection, shown two years ago, was a capsule range of fluid silk/jersey and glazed cotton separates. "When we told our friends we were designing clothes, they thought we were mad," says Paul, as Thelma interjects: "But we've never been into fashion to make a million. We're passionate about it and we want to enjoy it." A cliché, but an accurate one. Paul and Thelma have never stopped having a good time, and the shop is an extension of their sociability, as customers pop in for tea and a chat as well as to shop.

Their current collection is based around a simple but effective idea. Most of the clothes (primarily for women, with a few token unisex pieces), are made from Airtex, a staple of school sportswear, and a favourite of Austrian designer Helmut Lang. The colourful range is pull-on, washable, uncreaseable, and no item costs more than £100. Thelma and Paul cite American



designer Norma Kamali as an important influence. Kamali came into her own as a designer after her divorce in 1978, opening a shop called On My Own (OMO), and was a specialist in creating colourful versatile clothes that could be worn in several ways and in different situations. Their range reflects this easy-dressing concept. (Kamali is also regarded by many as the innovator of easy dressing, using bodysuits and unitards before Donna Karan had thought of them.)

Just after the shop opened last week, Corinne, singer with Swing Out Sister, appeared in TEN. "She

spent three hours in the shop trying on different things," says Thelma.

"She tried the bright pink one-shoulder dress with orange elbow length gloves; she layered slip dresses over trousers and wrapped things around her middle – she looked fab, and then she left." Luckily Corinne only left to get some money and a couple of friends. She bought a bag-full of clothes to wear on tour and vowed she would be back again.

The clothes are refreshingly easy to wear, and are not just for skinny waifs. They are sporty, womanly and are the perfect way

to gather a summer wardrobe in minutes.

"You can come here and buy two interchangeable holiday outfits for under £200," says Paul. There are also some very fashion-conscious pieces, such as boob tubes, slip skirts, and strapless dresses. There are even coordinating "fag bags". "Every girl needs one of these when they're out," says Thelma.

Bernstock Spiers currently make their clothes at the back of the shop, so alterations and unusual size requests are not out of the question. Neither is a long trying-on session and a quick cup of tea.

Main pictures (above)

Long three-colour Airtex T-shirt dress, £80; elbow length gloves, £25. Blue and purple slip dress, £45; fag bag, £10. Yellow and pink short T-shirt dress, £60.

TEN, Columbia Road, London E2. Inquiries, tel: 0171-729 7229; fax: 0171-613 1317. Opening hours: Monday-Friday, 12 noon-7pm. Saturday, closed. Sunday, 11am-3pm.

## AD WATCH

Gossard supports Girl Power



They're a shameless lot at Gossard. Not content with shocking various maiden aunts and newspaper columnists with their advertisement last year, which said "Who says a woman can't get pleasure from something soft", they're at it again with another campaign every bit as suggestive. Once again the shapely form of Sophie Anderton will be challenging us from the boardings, but this time, you will be surprised to learn, the eyes have it.

Last year's ad campaign for their Glossy underwear – described as "smooth, seamless softwear designed to create a glamorous nude look underneath summer clothes" – caused a moral outcry, and a record number of complaints (321) to the Advertising Standards Authority, none of which were upheld. The ASA later found out that the majority of complaints came from women who had, in fact, never seen the ads, and had been encouraged to write in by an outraged newspaper columnist. The

adverts, photographed by Herb Rits (who doesn't know how to take an unsexy picture), boosted the modelling career of Sophie Anderton who sprawled in the hay with her arms flung back and legs slightly parted, along with the now famous slogan. The ads increased sales of the Glossies range by 200 per cent and sadly catapulted Anderton onto our TV screens as the rather wooden presenter of Channel 4's fashion magazine programme "Desire".

The Glossies advert, (above) which will be plastered across London from next Wednesday has been masterminded by the same ad agency Abbott Mead Vickers, but this time a tamer photographer, Barry Lategan, has been used. Anderton is wearing the same bra and knickers she posed in last year (doesn't she ever change them?) but this time our heroine is facing her public head on. This time the slogan reads: "If I want something rough on my chest I'll get a man". It provokes the kind of laughter

reserved exclusively for girlie in-jokes – a low conspiratorial chuckle – and won't cause any feminist debate.

Sue Chidler, Marketing Manager at Gossard, is very pleased with the new ad campaign: "The model isn't prone. We wanted to concentrate on her eyes and show the advert as a shared joke between women". In fairness, when looking at the first advert which broke last June (just as The Spice Girls were polishing off the dance routine for *Wannabe*) the eyes were drawn to the body of the model. This time "eye contact" is established first.

"During our research women responded very well, they saw the fun-side, and felt it reflected a humorous view on life," continues Chidler. In fact, Gossard and their creative team at Abbott Mead Vickers have tapped into Girl-Power, and are using it as an effective and provocative marketing tool.

Women in their mid to late twenties (the age group who

buy the most "fashion" bras) have never had to dress like dowdy spinsters to keep men at bay. Women can wear whatever they wish in modern Nineties Britain without repercussion, and they can also wear a see-through bra for their own enjoyment and comfort (because it looks good and feels soft on the skin). This is Girl Power.

Sue Garrard, Board Director at AMV, is part of the creative team behind this advert. "If you are given a lingerie brand, you show the lingerie don't you? When we asked women if they are offended by the ads they say 'No'. That's all we need," she says. Men will of course be looking at Anderton's nipples, but men are men, what else can they do? They won't be wearing the bra, or the knickers, but they will be buying them for their partners, which is ultimately the purpose of advertising. To shift product and make bundles of money.

Melanie Rickey

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# From AbFab to Lab Fab

Out with the indulgent old bourgeoisie – in with, um, the Islington set. Grabbing a table at Granita and drizzling the ciabatta is only half the story, as outlined by Jane Farnival

It used to be an AbFab world of Bollinger, bad behaviour and bawdiness. Now we have New Labour, New Style – otherwise known as LabFab. It's a quieter, more decorous, more scrubbed-pine sort of world.

It's a world that starts with... a move to Islington.

● A house next to the Blairs in Richmond Crescent costs around £350,000 and comes complete with ready-fitted celeb neighbours such as Clive Anderson and Stephen Fry. For £300,000, you can buy a similar Georgian number in nearby Northfields Terrace. Trendy estate agents are Hotblack Desiato (314 Upper St, 0171-226 0160), who inspired LabFab-type Douglas Adams to use their name for a rock singer in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. For a mere £237,500, you can buy a penthouse apartment opposite Essex Road BR station (Dizzy Heights: 0171-359 5259).

● Don't bother equipping your LabFab home with antiques – anything really good would be ruined by the kids. Look instead for witty accessories from After Noah (121 Upper St), like a plastic vase that you stick on to the window. And for all those necessary ties, try storing them in old chemists' drawers from Number Nineteen, Camden Passage (0171-226 1991).

● Have lots of parties and invite Salman Rushdie, Dr Jonathan Miller, John Birt and Melvyn Bragg. Kathy Lette and any architect. Or just drop their names in dinner-party conversation. Judging by her book, the conversation of PR-turned-guru Lynne Franks, who inspired the character of *AbFab's* Edina, is littered with famous names and New Age therapies.

● Sit around a large, friendly, antique fruitwood kitchen table, purchased for £750, also from After Noah.

● Mix style with a social conscience. Wear Swatches, not Rollexes. Don't wear expensive necklaces because ostentatious wealth encourages envy, social division



A galaxy of new taste: from the people mover to the white shirts and Cherie's collection of shoes

and muggers. Fun jewellery is fine. Cherie has been seen wearing a brooch that looks like a bug has settled on her lapel with matching baby beetles on her ears, bought from Steinberg and Tolkein (193 King's Road, 0171-376 3660).

● Drive a people carrier. It will prove you are caring. Instead of spending £29,000 on a Range Rover, spend the same amount on an unpretentious Ford Galaxy.

● Chips are out; ciabatta is in. LabFab don't cook in fat; they drizzle with olive oil. Take any combination of sundried tomatoes, walnut bread and obscure, bitter salad leaves. *The River Café Cookbook* is the LabFab food bible.

● Send out for upmarket takeaways: marinated chargrilled vegetables or guinea fowl at about £3.50 a head from Limoncello, the right-on takeaway deli at 402 St John's Street, EC1 (0171-713 1678). Otherwise, try an old local corner shop –



A galaxy of new taste: from the people mover to the white shirts and Cherie's collection of shoes

Olga's Stores of 30 Pentonville Street (0171-837 5467), or muggins from the Canadian Muffin Company at 13 Islington High Street (0171-833 5004). Basic food shopping can be done on Sundays from Waitrose in Holloway Road, conveniently close to the Blairs' Catholic church – St Joan of Arc. Here, after mass, LabFabs load their people carriers with vegetable crisps and Antonio Carluccio's squid ink pasta at £3.35 a packet (dried pasta is trendier than fresh again).

● Alcohol is treated with respect. Wine must be good (never chardonnay). Beer is Rolling Rock (despite the penchant for it by the new Minister for Sport, Tony Blair). Water is San Pelligrino. Tea is either Indian, known jocularly as "work-ers", or herbal. Coffee is Lavazza.

● Eat out a lot, but only where you're great pals with the restaurant owner. Islington people favour Clerkenwell.



A galaxy of new taste: from the people mover to the white shirts and Cherie's collection of shoes

Stephen Bull's brasserie in St John's Street (0171-490 1750) serves seared swordfish and has tables on so many different levels, darling. Tony prefers suppers of sun-dried tomatoes or monkfish on a bed of humous at minimalist Islington restaurant Granita (127 Upper Street, 0171-226 3222). Cherie had her birthday party at Frederick's (Camden Passage, 0171-359 2888) whose menu includes a Blair special called crisp red mullet salad with aubergine caviar (£14).

● Flowers: LabFab people like blooms all of a single type by Paula Pryke, the former teacher who shot to fame doing Terence Conran's flowers in style restaurant Quaglin's. A dozen red roses with foliage cost £50 including Downing Street delivery. 20 Penton Street, N1 (0171-837 7336).

● You're allowed to be fascinated by fashion. Cherie has already augmented her 50 pairs of shoes by ordering two

pairs of Winter boots from Emma Hope's Shoes, (33 Amwell Street, EC1 – 0171-833 2367). She has ordered 2 1/2 inch-heel Vamp Boots, with a zip, at £229 and a second lower-heeled pair. Handbags are plain black and brown leather – one of each colour at £299 each.

● Wear made-to-measure Savile Row suits if a man. Unlike linen jackets, they stand up well to car journeys and flights. Off duty, wear chinos and an open top shirt. On duty, wear a white shirt. It symbolises leadership.

● If a woman, don't wear suits. Wear things that look like suits and call them "tailored separates", which sounds less "Chanel and more M&S. Cherie buys the ready-to-wear collection of LabFab star-wart Ronit Zilkha, who made the £450 rose-coloured suit she wore to the Palace on the morning after the election. 70 Hampstead High Street, NW4, mail order possible (0171-431 0253).

● Leave big hair to Hezza and bats to Tory ladies. Go for short, slick styles by Louise at Sessions, 5 Theberton Street, Islington (0171-704 9777), who will also lacquer your toe-nails for those all-important early-morning encounters with the paparazzi. For serious makeovers, try the salon of hair colouring whizz Jo Hansford (Mount Street, Mayfair, 0171-495 7774).

● LabFab is out. Cherie lost weight discreetly after facing the cameras' unforgiving eyes. She visits a gym three times a week and has a personal trainer, nanny and cleaner, but they're never in photo range. Try Sequin Park, 240 Upper St, N1. 0171-704 9844. Membership: £350.

● Any problems? Try The Life Centre, 15 Edge Street, W8 (0171-221 4602), or buy lots of aromatherapy stress cards in blue bottles from the Neal's Yard Natural Remedies (68 Chalk Farm Road, NW1, 0171-284 2039).

## Under the counter with Lindsay Calder

"The Season" is under way, and, according to my Veuve Clicquot guide to "The Season" (a smart little freebie which just fits in a mini Filofax), May goes something like this: the Royal Caledonian Ball, Grosvenor House Hotel; the 2000 Guineas, Newmarket; the Badminton Horse Trials; Glydebourne; and the Chelsea Flower Show. But there is a vital omission, which, nestled in between Newmarket and Badminton, is an annual must for me. Royal Ascot (17-20 June) is small beer compared to this event. You want hats? Well, get tickets now for next year's rugby league

showpiece, the Silk Cut Challenge Cup final at Wembley.

A summary of rugby league for the uninitiated: two teams sort of lunge at each other trying to get the ball, then one guy runs very fast and throws himself head first into a corner (four points), then, another guy tries to kick it through two white posts (additional two points if successful). As with all events of The Season, you must not just go to watch the game – it's more of an all-over body experience.

First you need to know who you are supporting. As I was going with Wilbur, Fergal, John and Sue – all fierce Wiganites – we couldn't support

St Helens (arch rival) so it had to be the Bradford Bulls, which meant chanting "Come on ye Bu-ulls," rather than "Come on ye Saints," and cheering for the ones in red, black and yellow. The Bulls supporters also had the best outfits. The ladies' hats were spectacular, bull-horn helmets and red wigs, complemented by Bulls kit shirts and, for the really dedicated, a full make-over: facial team colours, £4, from the face-painting stand outside the ground. But it is the variety of dresses worn that make this event so outstanding. A party in front of me were immaculately dressed in white tulle tutus, silver tiaras and white fish-

net tights. I only hope that the tutus had popper-fastening gussets as, by the amount of lager they were consuming, the lads wearing them were going to have trouble at half time.

You can make yourself look exceptionally ugly if you go the whole hog, or even the whole bull. One teenage girl had not only painted her entire face, but had dyed her hair red, black and yellow as well. Yet a trip to watch the Bulls can be made with relatively subtle accessorising – a Bulls horns hairband or a big sponge wavy hand are discreet options.

Entertainment is big at rugby league. On my first year there we had

Cliff Richard singing to kick things off. This year it was someone we thought was Diana Ross (again), but were told by the 13-year-old in our party that this was someone "new" in the charts. For real entertainment, you can't beat the life-size Bullman mascot. Forget an Andrex pup. I want a Bradford Bull I can have to stay. Get Bullish: For her Bulls shell suit, £60, velvet hat with horns, £15.99; for him, stadium jacket, £59.99, replica kit shirt, £39.50; for me, cuddly Bradford Bullman, £19. Bradford Bulls merchandise from 'The Bull Pen', Bradford Burger King 01274 721011. Tickets to '98 final, around £27, from participating clubs

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The amount spent on pet products and services	%
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1992	2.588
1993	2.7
1994	2.8
1995	2.9
1996	3.0
1997	3.1

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# Not quite a three-pot screamer

**ROAD TEST**  
**Vauxhall Corsa**  
By John Simister

This car looks familiar, but it makes a very strange noise. It's a curiously deep growl, wholly unexpected in a meek little supermini. The reason for the unusual soundtrack is that this new Vauxhall Corsa 1.0 is missing a cylinder, at least compared with its rivals. It has just three, instead of the usual four, and if you open the bonnet you'll see that this three-quarter engine is so small that it looks as though it should be powering a lawnmower, not a car.

There are, however, sound reasons for giving the hitherto wholly predictable and ultimately underwhelming Corsa an engine capable of becoming a conversation piece. With three cylinders instead of four, the engine's moving parts generate less friction because there are fewer of them. And because less heat is lost through fewer, bigger cylinders than through more, smaller ones, there's more energy left to propel the car. A three-cylinder engine, then, has the potential to be very economical.

If this engine were indeed powering a lawnmower, it would be a hi-tech one. The motor is a masterpiece of miniaturisation, with tiny tappets to open the

12 valves, and an electronic control unit so small that it's built right into the intake manifold. Technophiles will love it; so should motorcyclists, whose favoured engines the Vauxhall's closely resembles.

But all this, I fear, may be lost on the average Corsa buyer. After all, to date the Corsa has not been a car to delight the driving enthusiast, despite its cute curves and an admirably ergonomic interior.

Small cars are meant to be fun to drive, which means making them sharp and nippy, but Corsas have managed to be neither. Few small cars feel stodgy.

The reason for this is that Vauxhall has been bound by an engineering credo which calls for all its cars to be able to do an emergency lane-change manoeuvre at somewhere near its maximum speed while containing a full load of people and chattels, without even a novice driver

losing control. Though well-intentioned, if patronising, this is not a recipe for an entertaining small car. To its credit, Vauxhall has finally woken up to this and has packed the Corsa off to Lotus for some suspension aerobics.

Lotus moved a pivot-point here, fiddled with some springs there, and banished the feeling of flab. So, after the surprise of the new engine's sound has abated, you can enjoy a Corsa which both steers more

insidiously and rides over bumps better. It's no match here for a Ford Ka or the Peugeot 106/Citroën Saxo twins, but it's a big improvement. Soon there'll be a neat power-steering system available, too, which uses an electric motor attached to the steering column.

These improvements apply to the entire Corsa range, which includes 1.2, 1.4 and sporty 1.6-litre four cylinder versions, and some diesels, as well as the 1.0-litre three-cylinder. All are recognisable by a new front grille with a chrome V, as well as detail changes to trim. But it's that tiny new engine that draws your interest the most. It's not powerful – just 55bhp – but it is smooth, willing and able to achieve much higher revs than its deep, almost Porsche 911-like engine note suggests.

The only real snag is that the secret of the smoothness, a heavy flywheel, makes the engine slow to lose speed between upward gear changes, so you have to be patient to avoid a jerk. This encourages a laid-back driving style, which suits the meagre performance well. And if you get frustrated by the lack of pace, you can console yourself with the engine's remarkable economy. Driving it as fast and as hard as I could make the little Corsa go, I couldn't get it to travel fewer than 39 miles on a gallon of petrol.

So here, at last, is a Corsa with some of the personality its looks always promised. But before we get too carried away with the forward thinking of Vauxhall's General Motors parent, it's worth remembering that the Japanese have been building tiny three-cylinder engines

## VAUXHALL CORSA STING

### Specifications

Price: £8,400 on the road  
Engine: 973cc, three cylinders, 12 valves, 55bhp at 5,600rpm; five-speed gearbox, front-wheel drive  
Performance: top speed, 93mph; 0-60mph in 17.6 sec.  
Fuel consumption: 45-49mpg

### Rivals

Citroën Saxo 1.1X, £8,195 OTR: Well-priced, comfortable and fun to drive. Same goes for the similar Peugeot 106 1.1 XL (£8,505 OTR). Fiat Punto 55S, £7,622: Good value, distinctive looks but lacks refinement. Revised Punto comes in June.  
Ford Ka, £8,015 OTR: To look at, as radical as a Mini was back in 1959. To drive, pure entertainment. Best small car on offer today.  
Nissan Micra 1.0 Shape, £7,995 OTR: Round and cuddly like the Corsa, but too Toyota for some.  
Volkswagen Polo 1.0L, £7,990 OTR: As slow as the Corsa, but bearable. Looks neat, feels solid.

for years. It just goes to show that there's nothing new under the rising sun.

The new engine appears first in the Corsa Sting, a limited-edition model based on the entry-level Corsa Merit three-door but with three-spoke alloy wheels, a sunroof and metallic paint. Other trim levels will follow.

## The power and the glory

Grand Prix racing drivers of the Thirties dived with death in 580bhp beasts on skinny tyres over potholed circuits. Gavin Green recalls a British hero

Everyone needs heroes. And because racing drivers risk their lives, are youthful, and often good-looking (the main prerequisites for idolisation by the young), they are often venerated. My six-year-old son, for instance, adores Damon Hill, as do many of his school chums.

But for me the real racing heroes existed many decades earlier. None more so than the charming, handsome, Rugby-then-Cambridge-educated Dick Seaman, the greatest English racing star of the Thirties. I certainly didn't idolise Seaman as a youngster: he'd been dead 20 years when I was born. In fact, I knew little about him until I read *Racing The Silver Arrows* by Chris Nixon, 10 years ago. It chronicled, in an entertaining yet erudite manner, the most fascinating of all periods in motor racing – the late Thirties.

Seaman was then the English hero. The 6ft 3in blond Brit did a Jesse Owens to the local racing stars at the 1938 German GP, winning in front of various senior-ranking Nazis and more than 100,000 swastika-waving locals after German hero Manfred von Brauchitsch's car caught fire in the pits. Sure, he'd been driving a Mercedes. But, in those days, if you wanted to win, you drove German. Hitler saw

motor racing as a way to prove German superiority. And Mercedes-Benz and Auto Union (precursor to today's Audi) were charged with delivering the goods. They swept aside the previously dominant Alfa Romeo team – run by Enzo Ferrari – from the 1934 season onwards, and then proceeded to dice with each other for another five years before the inevitable world war brought the action to an end.

They were awesome cars. In 1937, the 580bhp Mercedes GP cars were more powerful than any Formula One car for the next 50 years. And yet they drove around on spindly tyres, barely wider than bicycle rubber. They must have been impossibly difficult cars to control. Yet heroes such as Seaman, the German stars Rudi Caracciola, von Brauchitsch, Hans Stuck and Bernd Rosemeyer, and Italian drivers Nuvolari and Varzi (the latter an aristocratic morphine addict) mastered these monsters at speeds of more than 170mph on broken, rutted, narrow roads surrounded by trees and hedges and buildings, in pursuit of glory. Many died going about their business. It was a hazardous occupation, like being a fighter pilot was just a few years later.

Seaman had wealthy parents who hoped he'd study for the bar and possibly stand for Parliament. They inadvertently



Dick Seaman (centre) in his Mercedes, shortly before the 1939 Belgian Grand Prix in which he was killed

PHOTOGRAPH: HULTON GETTY

bankrolled his early racing. But his father died from a heart attack, mistakenly believing that his son had been killed in a race. His mother continued to resist young Seaman's death-defying attempts to be a racing champion.

By this time, he'd been noticed by the then-dominant Mercedes team. They offered him a drive. Like all German factory drivers, Seaman had to be approved by Hitler. Once approval was given, Seaman started to taste success. But his greatest win was in Germany when, against the odds and very much against plans, he upstaged the local heroes to score a victory at the world's

most challenging racing circuit, the Nurburgring.

Not long before, he had met a German girl, Erica Popp, daughter of the president and co-founder of BMW. They were married at the end of 1938, to great resistance from Seaman's mother, who detested the idea of her son marrying a German – never mind that she was beautiful, educated and rich.

In mid-1939, with war imminent, Seaman was leading the Belgian Grand Prix at the fast and dangerous Spa circuit, when he crashed at high speed in the wet. His Mercedes hit a tree, which broke his arm. Then the car caught fire. The 26-

year-old Englishman was dragged from the blazing wreck by a brave young Belgian soldier, but he suffered awful burns. The following day he died.

He was buried in his father's grave at Putney Vale cemetery in south-west London. The entire Mercedes team attended, as did Erica and his mother, although there was no last-minute reconciliation. Hitler sent a huge laurel wreath, although it was not taken to the cemetery.

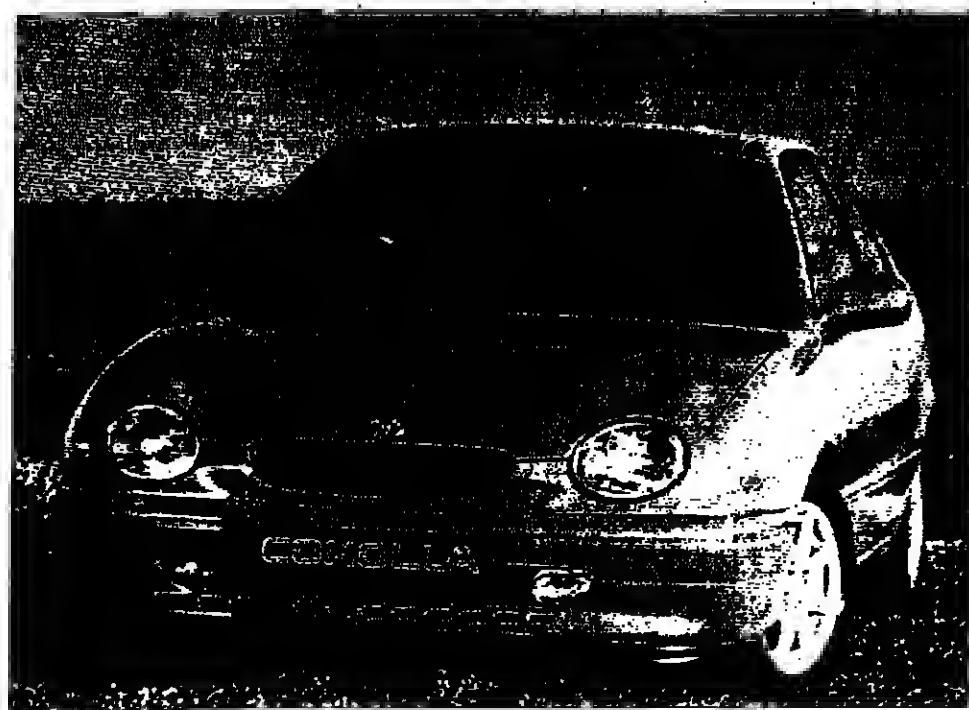
For me, the period of racing is so intriguing because the cars were objects of such extraordinary beauty and power; the cast of characters is so fascinating; and

because of the political situation which so profoundly affected the lives of the drivers and their friends. It was also the start of the internationalisation of motor racing: the Mercedes and Auto Union teams performed around the world, from Europe to North Africa to the USA and South America.

Two things have recently rekindled my interest in Seaman, and the incredible Silver Arrows, as the Mercedes and Auto Union cars became known. The first is the re-issue of Chris Nixon's fascinating book. Second is news that Auto Union and Mercedes GP cars from the Thirties will thunder up the hill-climb course at this year's Festival of Speed at Goodwood. Hans Stuck's son, Hans Stuck Jr, will drive an Auto Union. And Stirling Moss, just a boy when Seaman was killed, is likely to drive the same type of Mercedes in which Seaman enjoyed such success. It should be quite a spectacle, the stuff of which heroes are made.

Chris Nixon's book, *Racing The Silver Arrows*, is published by Transport Bookman, priced £39.95. The Goodwood Festival of Speed will be held at Goodwood House, West Sussex, from 20-22 June. Information and tickets 01243 787766

## Toyota tailors a Euro Corolla



TOYOTA HAS just unveiled a new Corolla especially designed for Europe. To be built at Toyota's factory near Derby from next year, the new European Corolla has a number of visual and mechanical changes compared with new Corolla models to be sold elsewhere. It's part of Toyota's drive to differentiate its models in world markets.

The new European Corollas, which go on sale this summer, feature unusual "insect eye" oval headlights and different grilles depending on the trim level, including a honeycomb design. Toyota reckons this helps give the European

Corolla "more of a face" and more of a personality. In Europe, the Corolla has long been criticised for its styling dullness and lack of visual character. Cars such as the latest Fiat Bravo/Brava and Renault Megane have shown it up.

Mechanical changes include the availability of a six-speed gearbox. In most other ways, the car uses upgraded current Corolla components. Three- and five-door hatchback, four-door sedan and estate versions are all planned.

The design was actually done in Japan, although Toyota's European

operations were said to be consulted regularly. Initially, the car will be imported from Japan, like all European Corollas in the past, but late next year Toyota's factory near Derby will take over production of the five-door hatchback – likely to be the big seller.

Next year Toyota hopes to sell 160,000 Corollas in Europe, up from 118,000 last year. This compares with likely sales of 600,000 this year for the best-selling European car in the class, the VW Golf.

Gavin Green

## motoring

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# homes & money

## New Labour, new mortgage?

The changing face of the mortgage market



As interest rates rise yet again, Nic Cicutti looks at the best-value new mortgage options

In the end, the only thing the markets were wrong about was the timing. Predictions of a bank base rate rise shortly after the election – irrespective of which party won – had been rife for months. Gordon Brown surprised many observers, however, with his decision to bring forward the increase by 24 hours.

The Chancellor's move provoked the inevitable scramble by lenders to follow suit with their home loan rates, by an average of 0.35 per cent. Halifax, TSB, Cheltenham & Gloucester, Abbey National and Coventry Building Society were among several hiking the cost of mortgages by about £13 a month for a typical interest-only variable rate loan of £50,000.

Significantly, not all lenders have rushed to raise the cost of a mortgage. Nationwide, Bradford & Bingley, Yorkshire and Britannia – all of them strong proponents of mutualism – are among those refusing to follow the herd. Even when they do, the rise will almost certainly not be on the same scale as the others, further deepening the divide between themselves and the newly-floated banks.

The continuing rivalry between banks and building societies should mean the drive towards higher rates expected by most experts may not be as frenzied as it might have been. The signs are already there: the Coventry, for example,

was at pains to point out this week that its new 7.6 per cent rate would still leave up to half its borrowers on a lower "loyalty" rate.

For existing and would-be borrowers, the key questions are whether this week's announcement is the first of many and if it is, what to do. Experts are united in the belief that mortgage rates are on the way back up, with 8.5 per cent at the upper end of current predictions. So, if rates are on an upward curve, what should potential new borrowers do?

Nick Deutsch, chief executive at First Mortgage, a telephone-based home loan broker and main lender, says demand has meant that in many cases, lenders are running out of fixed-term money within 24 hours of launching a new mortgage.

"We are being contacted by people who know that we can process and accept their applications for fixed loans even faster than the lenders can themselves," he says.

The search for that elusive rate-beating deal has, however, taken a new turn. For it, as many economists suggest, the Chancellor's move to allow the Bank of England to set its own interest rates leads to greater stability in the longer term, long-term mortgage rates will be coming down over the next two or three years.

The prospect opens up for the first time, in

the UK at least, the possibility of long-term fixed rates actually lower than prevailing standard variable rates. If so, fixing at today's rates is not as sensible as it initially sounds.

Ian Darby, director at John Charcol, the UK's largest mortgage broker, says: "Those who believe rates are likely to come back down again should protect themselves in the immediate period and have the kind of product that will then be placed to follow them later."

John Charcol is offering a choice of products, including a "capped" mortgage, with a standard variable rate of 7.39 per cent which is guaranteed not to rise above 7.99 per cent between now and June 2002. Alternatively, there is the option of a "fix and cap", beginning with a rate of 6.99 per cent until April 1999. Thereafter the loan reverts to the prevailing standard variable rate, capped at 7.99 per cent until April 2002.

Mr Darby says: "With these loans, you get the advantage of knowing that the cost of your loan will fall if rates do, but will not rise above an acceptable level for the duration of the initial period. Of course, one could put an equally persuasive case for discounted mortgages."

Discounts are the name of the game at Mortgage Intelligence, a network of some 400 brokers throughout the country. Sally Laker, the network's general manager, says: "Up to now,

people have argued in favour of fixed rates.

"But we think it may be time for people to consider discounts. This way, you get the attraction of an immediate saving on the prevailing mortgage rate. If rates do go back down, so will the discounted mortgage."

Mortgage Intelligence has negotiated a 1.5 per cent discount on the existing variable rate for five years. Borrowers also receive a £300 cashback to cover legal fee and valuation costs. The valuation fee itself is fixed at £1 for every £1,000 plus VAT of the loan. Ms Laker claims the discount could save a borrower with an £80,000 loan about £100 a month for five years.

And what of existing borrowers? Those who are already locked into fixed rates should already have loans which compete reasonably well with today's prices. For them, it makes little sense in switching, particularly given existing redemption penalties.

Anyone with a variable rate, or a fixed rate about to end soon should seriously consider capping or discounting. Savings over two or three years will easily compensate for the hassle and expense of re-mortgaging – but only if redemption penalties are low or non-existent.

Mortgage Intelligence 0800246000; John Charcol 0800718191

## Three on view

Coach houses

The Old Coach House eight miles from Leamington Spa in Warwickshire was originally the coach house to the larger Fields House nearby. Grade II listed and converted into a five-bedroom home, the drawing room has an exposed brick chimney breast and all rooms have exposed timbering. The old coach entrance is now a set of French doors from the dining room to a patio. £275,000 through Knight Frank (0178927735)

The Coach House in Arundel was once part of the Duke of Norfolk's Arundel estate. While the Victorian building was being converted into a four-bedroom home, a bundle of love letters dating from around 1900 was found in the loft. They were from a young florist called Julia to Dan Lee, landlord of the Black Rabbit pub, where the letters are now on display. £230,000 through Jackson Stops (01243 786316)

The Coach House in Old Cotessey near Norwich is an unusual corner building converted into a three-bedroom house. The morning room was previously the harness room, with two round windows. A spiral staircase links the dining hall with the first floor. There are mature gardens, a small orchard and two acres of woodland. Within the grounds there are two garages which may be used as a large studio or library. £225,000 through Bedford 01328 730500.

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# Fantasy buyers for dream homes

Vendors and estate agents should be wary of bogus offers, writes Penny Jackson

Who hasn't leafed through the brochure of some glorious house and wondered "what if"? The price could be half-a-million pounds, one million, two million – it doesn't matter because the dream stops short of taking real money into the calculations. It's a fleeting lifestyle fantasy that is fun while it lasts.

For a few, though, pictures are not enough. They contact the agents and present themselves as plausible buyers of expensive properties and then proceed to string everyone along until they can bluff no more. At this point, they usually disappear.

They are quite different from the numerous time-wasters who are merely curious about how the wealthy live or want a few good decorating ideas. Far from being satisfied with a quick snoop, their game is out over until, at the very least, their offer has been accepted. David Forbes of Chesterfields has come across two such American operators recently. "One wanted to buy a £3m house the other a £5m property. They had very good stories about claiming to be in the media and in Hollywood. They both made offers and even instructed UK solicitors. One then disappeared while the other kept finding excuses for not producing a financial reference."

Not unnaturally, vendors left in the lurch take their frustrations out on the agents. "We cannot turn down someone who appears to be genuine," says Mr

Forbes. "We do carry out checks, but there are limits. It is not the culture here to get financial references at this stage and most people would get pretty upset if you did ask. In parts of America you have to provide proof of wealth before you can look round a high-value home."

It is not surprising that David Forbes would like this to become the practice here. He has seen bogus buyers go as far as employing the staff of a large house, instructing solicitors and surveyors and then disappearing just before the exchange of contracts. One so-called buyer was only found out after he was overheard boasting about his deception in a Chelsea pub.

So why should anyone want to pretend to buy a house? According to Cary Cooper, professor of psychology at UMIST in Manchester, they are delusional either because they have convinced themselves they can buy or they have to save face by keeping going. "Such imposters have no self-worth," he says. "If they were not buying houses they would be acting out other roles. At the voyeuristic level, they like going round, say, a movie star's house to put a bit of glamour into their lives."

Clearly, the attention paid to anyone who looks good for a few million is a great boost to the ego, and celebrity homes have the bogus buyers out in force. When Savills was selling David Lean's house in Docklands the company was struck along twice by bogus offers, despite numerous checks, recalls



Jonathan Hewlett. Some owners require people to sign a confidentiality clause before looking around. "I always ask one or two pertinent questions. If the buyers are genuine they will answer you openly. Anyone rude or abrupt sets the alarm bells ringing," says Mr Hewlett.

It is not just the top end of the market that suffers from time-wasters. The boom in new-build absorbs a good share of the "carpet-treaders" whose idea of a good weekend is viewing someone's house, but there are those who are put in offers with no intention of buying or as a back-up while continuing to look around. Henry Woods of Douglas & Gordon's Battersea office recently took a couple with £300,000 to spend around a number of four-bedroom houses. After two weeks

of intensive negotiation a price was agreed. "They were moving from a nasty high-rise block so were excited about the whole affair. They had tea with the vendors and measured up and contracts were sent out. My suspicions were aroused when I kept seeing them around even though they were supposed to be abroad. They told us contracts and a banker's draft had been sent by registered post and we spent ages rooting around in the local sorting office. The couple then evaporated into thin air."

The fact that nothing locks buyers or sellers into a binding agreement until contracts are exchanged makes it ripe for exploitation. "Anyone can make any number of offers and legally we have to write to our clients with details. We will

of course warn them if we have any doubts," says Mr Woods.

While agents can spot the more obvious fantasists – those who ask where they can park their McLaren F1, or those with an impressionable girlfriend in tow – they are aware of the possibility that they could be genuine. Jonathan Hewlett, weary of bearing about relatives who are princes or sultans, had his doubts about a very large bid. "I was told that the man had arrived in the country with a full police and diplomatic escort. He just seemed implausible to me." And David Forbes knows of one agent who must be ruling the day he ignored a scruffy young man wearing a baseball cap. "The man then went round the corner and spent £4m."

## Good news in Blair country

Under the massed ranks of cameras last weekend, Islington enjoyed its finest hour. All over the world, people were given pictures of New Labour's spiritual heartland basking in glorious sunshine. No wonder that estate agents were counting the landslide in pounds rather than votes. They are hoping that the Prime Minister will do for Islington what Margaret Thatcher did for Chelsea.

"The election really put Islington on the map," says Jeremy Campbell-Harris of Winkworth. "Prices have already gone up by up to 48 per cent in the last year. In Richmond Crescent, the Blairs' street, a house that sold for about £400,000 12 months ago, is now selling for anything from half a million to £700,000."

There has, indeed, been an enormous swell of interest in the area, yet perhaps this has rather more to do with its proximity to the City and the West End than its political celebrities. Restaurants and bars are full in the evening and the Bohemian atmosphere is drawing people away from areas such as Notting Hill, where prices have moved into the premier league. Angel, Barnsbury and Canonbury are becoming known as the new W11.

Yolande Barnes of Savills Research has for some time predicted that Islington will fall into the prime central London category, although she cautions against regarding it all in the same light. "It has pockets of Georgian stock that have arrived in terms of prices, but it doesn't yet have the cachet of the traditional prime areas."

North London has always been a combination of prime and borderline areas with changing fortunes. Hampstead, St Johns Wood and Belsize Park are surrounded by patches that have fast been getting snarled. Camden, for instance, has the pull of Camden Lock which has brought about a dramatic improvement of shops and restaurants over the past 10 years. Rather like Islington, its trendy status is reflected in the prices.

Marc Goldberg of Hamptons International has suddenly seen some pretty roads on the Chalk Farm patch become more prestigious, while Primrose Hill he describes as a "diamond patch". In Chalcott Square, between Camden Town and Regent's Park, a house that was not worth more than £900,000 at the peak of the market in the Eighties is currently being sold for almost £2m.

As an alternative to Hampstead, Mr Goldberg points to Highgate – a real London village that hasn't yet been commercialised. A Georgian family house would be less than £800,000 rather than over £1m in Hampstead. Ben Stagg of Goldschmidt & Howland reports that the market here has been fairly quiet. "If a house is not exactly right, buyers will walk away."

In his area – from Regent's Park to Hampstead – the greatest pressure is for houses between £450,000 and £1m. "There's a squeeze from all fronts – from people trading down, families trading up and even young buyers on very good salaries. We have plenty of couples selling two-bed flats in Hampstead for £250,000 and going straight for properties in the £600,000 plus region."

Penny Jackson

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# A good start to life under Labour

**S**o, life under Labour has begun with an outburst of the much lamented feelgood factor in the financial markets. This, I hope, will not come as a complete surprise to readers of this column. A few months ago, I quoted the views of Stephen Lewis, the experienced bond analyst, that foreign bond investors would react warmly to news of a convincing victory by a moderate Labour Party apparently committed to stern anti-inflationary policies and the pursuit of greater integration with Europe.

And so it has proved: the markets like certainty more than anything else, and there is nothing if not durability in the prospect of a government with such a large majority.

The big surprise so far of course has been Gordon Brown's rapid and unexpected move to give control over the setting of interest rates to the Bank of England. The markets had already largely bought the argument that Labour is now a seriously moderate party shorn of its old tax-and-spend habits. But Mr Brown has moved quickly to shore up the Government's credibility with the "bond market vigilantes" still further by pre-empting any lingering uncertainty about the seriousness of his intentions to avoid taking political liberties with interest rates.

This is a profound and historic change in the way we conduct our economic policy. If it works out



Jonathan Davis

The next test of the new Government's credibility will come in the Budget

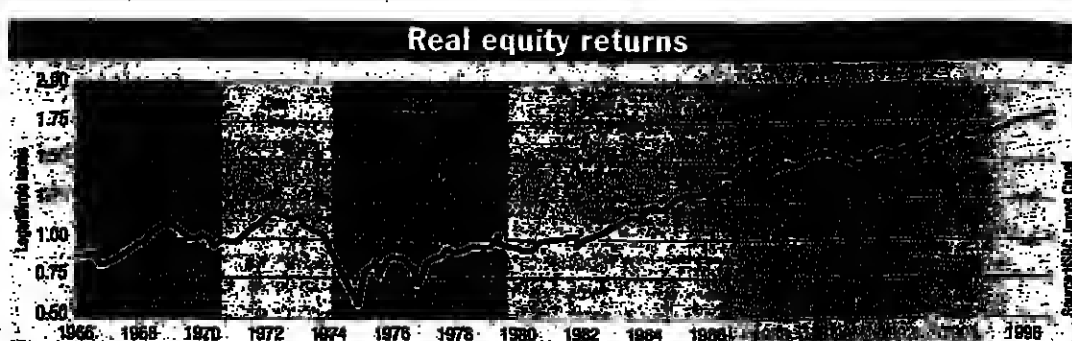
as presented, investors will have good cause to celebrate the slaying of one Labour bogeyman: that it is the party of inflation. Last week's market reaction was certainly encouraging. Short-term rates went up, as the Bank of England wanted, but the yield on long-term gilts – which is the one that ultimately matters most for industry and investors – fell quite dramatically.

The stock market was also up 4 per cent in a week by midday yesterday. This is exactly what you would expect to happen if the markets had accepted that long-term inflation prospects have improved as a result of the new monetary policy arrangements. The whole rationale of central bank control of interest rates is one of "short-term pain, long-term gain". The more credible the anti-inflationary strategy is seen to be, the more quickly long-term interest rates can fall and the more benign both

the economic and investment environment will become. That's in theory: of course the new arrangement has still to be made to work in practice. While there is clear evidence that countries with independent central banks tend to have lower rates of inflation than those which do not, what Mr Brown has proposed is only a halfway house towards full independence.

We don't know how the new monetary policy committee at the Bank, with its "expert" members nominated by the Chancellor, will work in practice. It is worth remembering that most of our leading economic competitors have arrangements which already give their central banks more control than the Bank of England will have – so the change, while radical in our terms, will not give us any competitive advantage over other countries.

The new arrangement, while



agreeable to contemplate, is certainly not yet a guarantor of improved economic performance. There is no law which says the Bank will be any better at reading the economic runes than anybody else, and in fact its recent record in predicting inflation and the level of economic activity has been patchy at best. Nor does the new arrangement actually guarantee that politics will be taken out of interest rate decisions. Even in countries such as Germany and the United States, where the central banks have much greater constitutional freedom than ours, they are constantly engaged in behind-the-scenes battles with governments intent on keeping the economy moving along.

Still, there is no reason to be grudging about accepting the thrust of what Mr Brown is trying to do or about believing his intentions. Assuming the economic climate remains as benign as it is today, investors are right to take comfort from what has happened. A period of low inflation, coupled with a Government that seeks to retain tight control over the budget deficit and is committed to supporting business (if those two promises also turn out to be true), should hold no great fears for investors.

The next test of the Government's credibility will come in the Budget. How far will Mr Brown move to fill the gap in the public finances by additional taxation on companies? Raising the rate of corporation tax by 2 per cent would raise £2bn and must look a tempting target, given the strong recent rise in industry's return on capital. And how far will he move to cut the tax privileges of the pension funds by restricting further the advance corporation tax credit on dividends? Either step threatens to put a lid on the scope for the stock market to

move ahead. Over at the Department of Trade and Industry, meanwhile, we wait to see how the new ministerial regime rules on the various bids and deals awaiting merger clearance. It will be a good litmus test of the Government's professed desire to promote competition.

It is true that Labour governments have not traditionally been as good for the stock market as Conservative ones. In nominal terms, the returns on shares might appear to tell a different story, but if you look at real returns (after inflation) the story is clear enough, as my chart shows. For obvious reasons, industrial shares have tended to do better under Labour in the past than financials, and vice versa under the Tories. Because of its poor inflationary record, the returns on gilts have also been inferior under Labour. Such parallels with the past have only limited relevance today,

however. After all, we have never before had to deal with a Labour government which is trying so hard to emulate – or, in the case of this week's monetary policy changes, to outdo – what are traditionally thought of as Tory policies.

Before embracing too readily the message that New Labour will be good for investors, don't forget: (a) that stock markets are already highly valued in historical terms; and (b) that we cannot divorce our fortunes from those of the rest of the world. A timely study this week from PDM, the fund management group, reminded us that the UK stock market has out-performed all other leading stock markets since the dark days of 1975.

As Warren Buffett, the legendary American investor, also pointed out this week, the stock market cannot go on producing its current exceptional rates of growth forever. Even if the risk from a Labour government has diminished, the risk of mean reversion remains. And, of course, one bold announcement does not remove the risk that New Labour will be bounced out of its confident stride by the turn of unforeseen events. Still, after last week's welcome beginnings, nothing has changed my view that gilts remain a sound bet – and who would have thought one could ever have said that with a Labour Chancellor newly installed in Downing Street?

## For a fistful of dollars

Currency: Exchange rates mean more than holiday cash, says Rachel Fixsen

**F**or most of us, most of the time, foreign currency is an issue to be addressed once or twice a year during a foreign holiday as we painstakingly count out the drachmas or the pesetas to pay for our ice creams.

We all know holidays abroad become much cheaper when sterling is strong. Trips to France cost a lot less now that a pound buys nearly nine and a half French francs.

Perhaps not surprisingly, few people realise the role such fluctuations can have on their daily lives. "People are aware of [currency changes], but not the potential impact they can have," says Tim Cockerill, investment director at Whitechurch Securities in Bristol. This is particularly the case for millions of small investors.

Even if your money is invested within the UK, the pound's struggles abroad have an impact on shares. For example, many private investors are unaware of indirect holdings by their fund managers in foreign bonds and shares. A unit trust may be quoted in sterling, for example, though most of its underlying assets are in foreign currencies. If you invest in an international growth unit trust, for example, or a European equity fund, then the value of your investment will be hit by sterling's fate.

Even for those with no direct equity investment to their name, the pension funds they belong to will usually have some overseas investment, and exchange rate fluctuations make themselves felt. If sterling is weak

against major currencies, foreign investment returns are magnified, and vice versa.

Even your mortgage payments could be affected by the pound. Remember 1992 when the government tried to shore up sterling by pushing interest rates sky-high?

Why do currency values change? A currency becomes strong when it is in demand. It is in demand when it gives investors a good return. So, if interest rates are higher in the UK than in the US, the pound is likely to rise, and vice versa.

But big investors are always looking ahead: they don't wait until it is obvious to everyone that interest rates in the UK are rising. They aim to predict a rise much earlier, so they can buy the pound before it has become expensive.

Financial institutions often manage to make huge amounts of money by betting on future currency movements. Traders made a killing out of sterling's abrupt departure from the European exchange rate mechanism in 1992, for example.

Conversely, sterling's recent strength against the mark has hit British exporters hard, as their goods are priced out of foreign markets.

The pound has climbed to dizzy heights in the last year against the German mark and the dollar. But dangers lurk. JP Morgan currency analyst Avinash Persaud sees the pound falling as low as 2.67 marks in the next two months, from a recent level of 2.82, as the uncertainty over



The professionals: In theory, you could make your own bets on currency movements but it's very risky

the imminent Budget takes its toll. "There is a currency risk with every overseas investment," says Brian Turner, treasury director of Henderson Investors. Henderson runs a European fund, where returns in cash terms have been hit by sterling's latest show of strength. "Gains have most certainly been reduced," Mr Turner says. Sterling's trade-weighted exchange rate has risen 15 per cent since July.

Fund managers can erase the risk of currency fluctuations by what is known as hedging. This basically means they pay a third party to take

the risk on for them, by means of complex financial instruments called derivatives.

Can small-time players get a piece of the action? In theory – but remember, the foreign exchange market is full of highly-paid individuals trying, and often failing, to forecast accurately how currencies will move.

You can hold a certain type of deposit account where you can switch your money from one currency to another at a very low cost. Fidelity Currency Funds are just such an account. In theory you could use this to bet on currency movements, mov-

ing out of sterling if you think it's value is about to fall, into marks. When the movement is over, you could move back into sterling, having made a profit.

But this is a highly risky business. Without the back-up that the banks have – huge economic research departments, whole teams analysing past patterns of currency behaviour and so on – you stand little chance of winning your bet.

For most of us, most of the time, the drama will be limited to getting our sums wrong over that cheap meal in a Greek taverna.

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# The taxman's a party-pooper

One of the most famous business sayings is that there is no such thing as a free lunch. The truth of that is something I leave you to judge, but one certainty is that virtually all entertaining has a tax cost.

The basic thrust of the tax system is that entertaining leads to a tax penalty for someone. There are exceptions, but anyone planning a function should bear in mind that a corporation tax disallowance – or an income tax charge – may be waiting in the wings. Add a VAT disallowance that will likewise be lurking and that £100 lunchtime gathering can be up to an equivalent £150 spend. (I'll concentrate on income and corporate tax in this article



John Whiting

but VAT irrecoverability basically parallels corporate tax disallowance. The extra tax cost can fall on the business (or employer if you prefer it) or, at least in part, on the individual. Starting with the business, entertaining spending is essentially tax disallowable. Entertaining is not just that lunch either – it means

Virtually all entertaining – even the staff social – means a tax penalty for someone

'hospitality of any kind'. Thus overnight accommodation for a consultant or sub-contractor counts as entertaining – and is therefore disallowable. Better to let the sub-contractor pick up the hotel bill (as subsistence) and recharge it (as expenses) perhaps. There is one tiny, and one large, exception to this general disallowance. The tiny one relates to gifts. A gift counts as entertaining and is thus disallowable – but not if it costs under £10, is not part of a series and carries a prominent advert for the donor. That probably covers the pen I am writing with – but not a bottle of Scotch because food, drink and related vouchers are excluded.

The major exception is staff entertaining. Some may remember entertaining overseas customers being allowable, but that went in 1988. There is a rule of thumb that anything for staff is tax-deductible for the employer – not a foolproof rule but it works here. The rationale is that there is always the opportunity to tax the individual. And that gives us the link to the second half of this issue – the fact that staff entertaining can lead to a benefit-in-kind income tax charge.

You may start to question this – after all, all those staff functions you went to were working lunches, or necessary staff socials to maintain morale. But, like it or not, there is a benefit here for the staff concerned. The Revenue will argue that benefit is taxable.

Such charges are often raised through PAYE audits carried out by the Revenue, with the employer frequently agreeing to settle the tax due on the employees' behalf.

This doesn't always happen – and I know one sizeable employer which warns the staff of the value of social functions so they can declare it on their tax return.

Again there are exceptions. Many readers will be aware that there is a concession for a Christmas party. Actually, the Revenue allows party costs up to £75 per head before raising a charge – and that doesn't have to be at Christmas. But it is all you get for a year and to count it has to cover the entire cost of one or more functions, not the first first £75 of some mega-bash.

With self-assessment now upon us, "third party" benefits are an issue. If someone other than your employer gives you a benefit, that may also be taxable. Normally hospitality won't count in this argument: remember it will have been disallowed on the "entertainer" – who will see it as non-staff entertaining. But go beyond this to an outright gift, prize or something similar and there is a taxable benefit looming.

Under self-assessment, the provider has an obligation to report benefits given in this way to the individual concerned. A value also has to be put on them, on a "cost to the provider" basis, so that the recipient can put the item on his or her tax return if appropriate.

It has to be said that we are getting into controversial areas here, not least because many such recipients are self-employed under different tax rules. For example, many travel writers would not see a benefit in a trip that is undertaken to write about a particular destination. But if their partner went with them, or if the trip was given to someone not involved with travel writing, there could be tax-sickness as well as travel-sickness from the trip.

All in all, entertaining is a fruitful area for the taxman to check up on. It may seem unfair, but don't forget that few people entertain the taxman.

John Whiting is a tax partner at Price Waterhouse

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<b>VARIABLE RATES</b>			
Bank of Scotland	12m	7.35	1.5/0.02
West Bank	12m	7.35	1.5/0.02
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Bank of Scotland	12m	6.99	1.5/0.02
West Bank	12m	6.99	1.5/0.02
<b>FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE RATES</b>			
Bank of Scotland	12m	6.99	1.5/0.02
West Bank	12m	6.99	1.5/0.02

## Best savings rates

Product	Period	Rate	Notes
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Bank of Scotland	12m	7.35	1.5/0.02
West Bank	12m	7.35	1.5/0.02
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# Headaches start when school's out

**College:** The need for parents to salt money away to pay for education is greater than ever. Andrew Verity reports

Parents whose children are taking A-levels in the coming weeks may find their hopes of good exam results are tempered by the knowledge that academic success means financial headaches for several years, as their offspring prepare for college life.

During the election, all the three main political parties claimed that education was a top priority for them. Labour said it would divert more funds into schools, mostly by re-allocating money previously spent elsewhere.

But David Blunkett, Labour's new Education Minister, is unlikely to find the significant new resources needed to offset the crisis facing higher education. Under Labour, as with the Tories before them, university students – and their parents – look set to become poorer.

The need for parents to salt money away to help pay for higher education is higher than ever. The first question is: how much will they need? Grants, frozen for the last 10 years, have fallen 36 per cent against inflation. In the year 1997 to 1998, they will be worth just £1,710 – or £2,105 in 1998. Students are taking up loans on preferential terms from the

Glasgow-based Student Loans Company, making life slightly easier – but not much. The maximum loan of £1,685 a year would give a total annual income (outside London) of just £3,395.

How does that compare with outgoings? Estimates from the National Union of Students suggest a student outside London can expect the minimum bill over the year of at least £4,500 – over £1,100 more than their income after outgoings are taken into account.

Even if inflation stays below 6 per cent, a student living this meagre lifestyle for three years will fall short by almost £4,000. Add on the loan and even cautious students will face a debt burden of £9,000 when they graduate. For those not eligible for a grant the total cost will be closer to £14,000.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, the body for university heads, is pressing for an "all-loan system" that will make students pay at least a third of tuition fees as well as living expenses. By 2005, this would increase the debt burden by £2,400 a year. Add to this the projected student debt burden and the cost of a university education after 2005 comes



Wheeling into debt: without provision, even the most cautious students can eventually face king-sized bills for their college education

to £16,000 between parent and child. If there is no entitlement to a grant, the total will be over £21,000.

Anne Peck, managing director of the School Fees Insurance Agency, says: "As it is, parents are reluctant for their children to start life with a debt. If tuition fees are introduced what option is there for parents who want the best for their offspring other than to fund their education themselves?"

It still seems an impossible amount to find. Yet many parents find that by investing a moderate sum now, they can offset the costs. Several companies offer specially tailored investment products aimed at saving for education. Look out for those that allow you to schedule payments when they fall due; it cuts out the pitfalls of arranging finance at the last minute. The School Fees Insurance Agency

offers a way of harnessing tax reliefs to let savers tap into growth in the stock market and maximise saving for education.

Each parent can put up to £6,000 in a PEP that invests in shares every year. There is no tax on the investment growth of the fund – and no tax on payouts. Regular monthly payments are also an option.

The PEP can then invest in a unit trust that may generate much higher growth than simply saving in a building society. Over the last three years, unit trusts invested in UK equities generated an average growth of 32 per cent. Invesco Fry Slater Growth has grown by 82 per cent over the three years to April.

Investing money with an insurance company's fund can also deliver good returns. Over the last three years, the average growth in UK equity funds was 27 per cent.

If you believe this will keep up, you can sharply reduce the burden of raising cash when your child attends university. If you pay £162 a month into a PEP, starting this year, your 12-year-old child could receive £1,500 a term by the time they go to college in the early 2000s.

Many believe that these returns are unusually good and will not be repeated. Anyone who believes interest rates will rise significantly and stay there would be better off investing in fixed-interest stocks, which offer certain returns, albeit at a lower rate than equity investments.

Because PEP providers often have initial charges, it makes sense to invest over a long period – preferably at least five years. Savers who have five years but little to save may be better off with a tax-exempt special savings account or Tessa. This pays a tax-free rate of about 7 per

cent a year at present, or savings of up to £9,000.

For parents with children who may go to college sooner than that, some companies offer efficient ways of releasing any spare equity in your home.

The School Fees Partnership can refer people to an independent adviser able to advise them on the company's Special Reserve Plan.

This in effect re-mortgages the family home – cheaper than a second mortgage – and allows parents to draw money later from the capital which that generates.

All educational savings plans allow parents to use payments for other purposes if they wish.

So even if a child decides against attending university, the money will pay for that long-promised holiday, car or special treat.

Premier General, a specialist insurance intermediary, has launched a policy that pays out in the event of disability, unemployment or business cessation. Premiums cost £3.95 per £100 of unemployment insurance or £6.55 for full cover. Call 0171 828 4434.

Friends Provident is launching a five-year fixed-income investment bond, offering a choice that includes income of 10 per cent per year. The bond is linked to the joint performance of the FT-SE 100 and German DAX share indexes: if prices are 5 per cent lower in five years than at present, investors receive only the balance of the original investment after income has been paid. Call 01722 715629.

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Plans, together with the 0.75 per cent charge on lump sum investments. The plans allow lump sum investments into four trusts investing in Europe, Japan and Asia. Call 0800 414110.

Cooper Lancaster Brewsters, a tax specialist, is offering a fixed-price tax return service to deal with the Inland Revenue's new self-assessment forms. The firm has also teamed up with Hambro to offer insurance cover, costing £29.50 a year, against professional costs involved in the Revenue's move to carry out random investigations into tax returns. Call 0545 626975.

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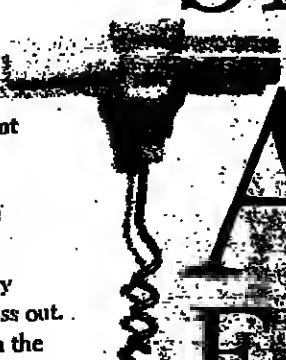
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Some sectors of the economy may prosper mightily under Labour. Which ones?



Brian R. Tora

I love surprises. I always have. Not for me sneaking a peak at the presents under the Christmas tree on 24 December. No, I like to be surprised.

Surprise is something of an understatement when it comes to describing the City's reaction to the decision of Chancellor Gordon Brown to loosen the ties that bind the Bank of England to the Treasury.

Note the word loosen. The changes announced last Tuesday did not amount to the creation of an independent central bank. Moreover, the Chancellor has reserved the right to re-assume the powers he has delegated if he considers it appropriate, while inflation targets remain the provenance of Government.

Overall, markets greeted the move with considerable enthusiasm. Gilt took particular heart from the de-politicising of the interest rate weapon. Even so, there remains a significant premium in yield terms between British government stocks and German bonds. The closer we get to joining a single European currency, the more difficult this disparity will be to justify. But it is hard to see the premium vanishing until we have a better indication of how the economy will be managed.

We may even have a few surprises there. Mr Brown's move on the Bank might have been welcomed overall in the Square Mile, but I do not recall reading or hearing of this move as part of New Labour's policy in the run-up to the election. If Mr Brown can deliver surprises like this so soon after he assumes power, heaven knows what he may have in store for us when the first Labour Budget is delivered.

Debating some of the other changes that life under Labour may bring to business and the City on the radio earlier this week, I was amazed at the Damascene conversion of those who in the past would have stood out strongly against the Social Chapter. It seems the minimum wage is unlikely to be the threat once feared. There is even a belief that some sectors of the economy might reasonably be expected to prosper

mightily under Labour. Telecommunications and media were two areas selected by David Muir of Ogilvy and Mather, whose report, *The Devil's in the Detail*, gives a snapshot of how he believes the Labour approach will make the world seem very different in corporate Britain.

Given the new digital revolution, perhaps we should be examining multi-media companies more closely in any event. Cynics might say that BSkyB is bound to prosper under a Blair administration, given the groundwork already put in by Rupert Murdoch. Quite what we will do with all these new television channels I am not certain but those companies must be looking forward to the future with confidence.

The property sector is another area that might benefit. Not only are there signs that the strength of the economy is beginning to spill over into greater enthusiasm for property investment and development, but falling gilt yields are likely to make property assets – and the shares of the companies who invest in them – that much more attractive.

Land Securities is the daddy of them all, although the shares are close to their high. But then so is the market. Still, with the yield fully 15 per cent above the market average, it looks a good widows and orphans stock.

Once again Wall Street is the driving force for our market. The growth in demand for financial assets in America has undoubtedly helped buoy stock values, but it is as well to remember in this digital age that market moves can take place very swiftly indeed.

There seems to be a growing technological bent this week – appropriate as one real growth industry is computer software. As well as the ticking millennium time-bomb, coping with a single European currency is exercising minds. For those who wonder how to benefit from the way our continental cousins are cashing in, a software provider is a good bet.

Brian R. Tora is chairman of the investment strategy committee of Greig Middleton & Co (0171 392 4000)

NAME: Diane Savage

AGE: 38

OCCUPATION: corporate liaison officer with a professional body. BACKGROUND: Diane earns £24,000 and plans to stay with her employer. Her long-term partner, Tony, is a graphic designer and they jointly own a property mortgaged on a fixed rate with the Bank of Ireland. In addition they have a small loan for home improvements through Midland Bank. The mortgage is covered with a joint life policy.

Diane has a good company pension scheme she joined 30 months ago. She also enjoys good health benefits from her employer. She has recently inherited £10,000 and wonders what to do with this. She has ethical concerns about where her money is invested.

THE ADVISER: Amanda Davidson, a partner at Holden Meehan, a firm of independent financial advisers in London (Tel 0171 404 6442)

THE ADVICE: "Diane benefits from a final salary pension scheme set up by her employer, where her final retirement income will be linked to the number of years she has been with the organisation. Her pension benefits are due to be paid at 62. In fact, Diane has indicated that she would like to retire at 65 and the pension scheme does allow for this.

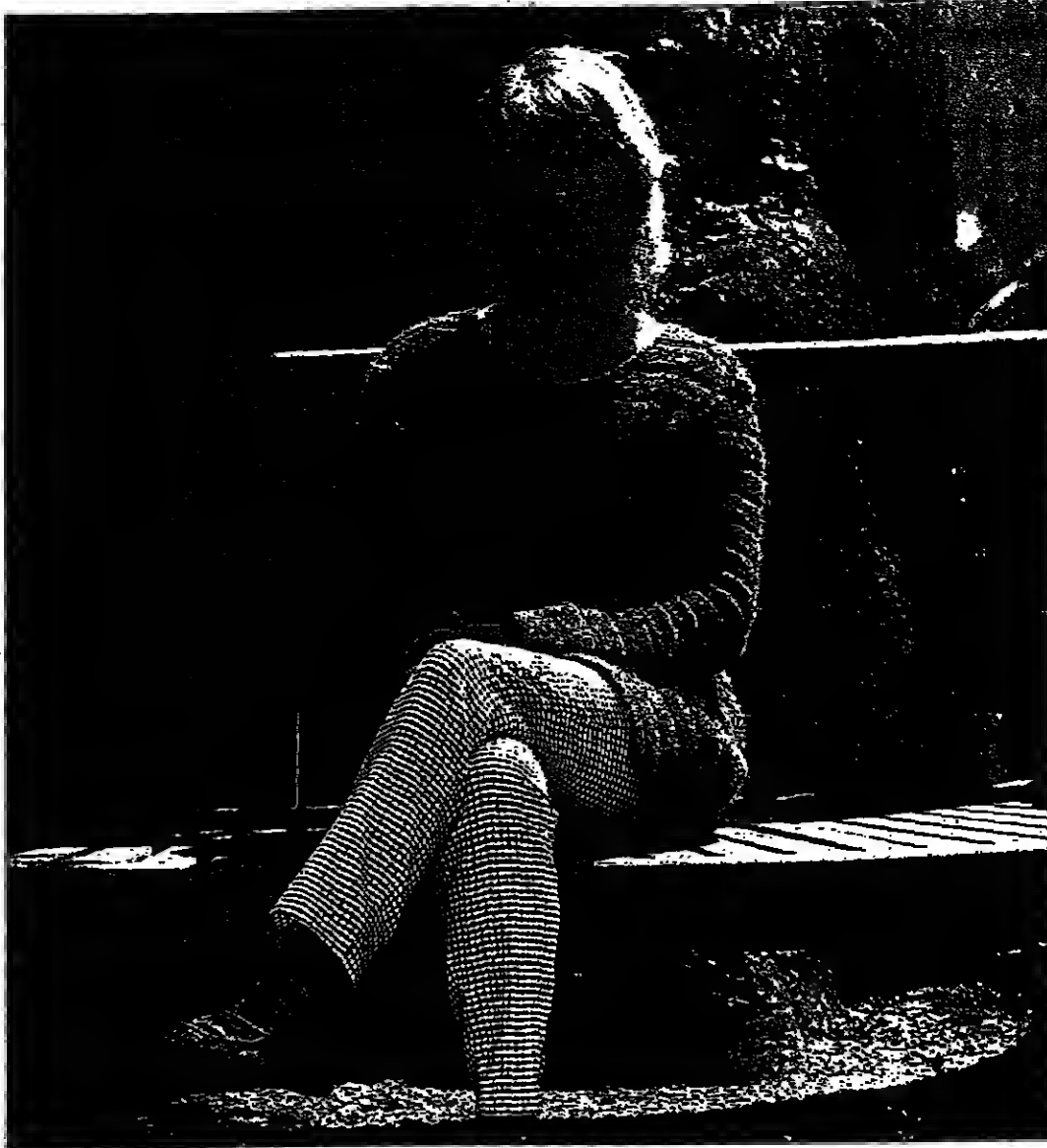
As Diane and Tony are not married, there are various house-keeping exercises that they should undertake. There are also benefits for which Diane is eligible that Tony cannot take advantage of.

The main one is the spouse's pension that would be paid in the event of Diane's premature death. Only the most enlightened employers make provisions for common-law spouses and Tony stands to lose £5,000 a year should Diane pre-decease him, because they are not married.

However, Diane has already made provision for Tony with her death-in-service benefit which is four times her income. She should also ensure that provision is made for Tony to benefit from the Allied Dunbar personal pension that she had prior to joining the company pension scheme.

Tony has a personal pension plan and he should make sure that this is left in trust for her. Neither of them has made wills, and this is something that they should do post-haste. They should check that ownership of the house is joint tenancy, so each will own the property should the other die.

Diane's firm provides a good health insurance policy for her if she should fall ill. This is basically 50 per cent of her income which increases at 3 per cent per annum.



## When there's a will

Makeover: Diane and her long-term partner should start by considering what happens if one of them dies

Whilst the 3 per cent increase is fine in low-inflation times, if the cost of living should increase the real value of Diane's ill-health income would reduce.

I therefore recommend that she consider taking out a critical illness policy for the amount of the mortgage – £66,000. Critical illness policies pay out in the event of the onset of certain illnesses and diseases, such as cancer, heart attacks or strokes. This would cost £20 a month with Skandia, an insurer that has an ethical fund.

Diane's pension is very good. However, she has joined it late and therefore there is room for improvement. If she retires at 65, she would be looking at about 50

per cent of her income. In order to top this up by a further 10 per cent, she should invest £60 a month net of tax into an additional voluntary contribution scheme (AVC).

She indicates that she has £380 a month left after basic household bills have been paid. Some of this will be taken up with the AVC pension top-up. The companies that I recommend she looks at for topping up her pension would be Friends Provident and NPI, which both run ethical funds.

Diane should certainly also investigate the in-house arrangement that the professional body operates. She is likely to find that the charges will be lower with this

scheme but she will not have the discretion of investing where she chooses, for instance in an ethical fund. She will have to weigh up the lower cost versus the other benefits of flexibility and choice.

As far as the inheritance is concerned, Diane has £10,000 for investment. I am not recommending that she repays some of her mortgage as it is on a fixed rate with the Bank of Ireland and she would suffer redemption penalties for so doing.

I recommend that she keeps £2,000 aside for short-term emergencies in an accessible fund. She should look at a postal account such as Cheltenham & Gloucester which would give a gross interest

Spare cash: Diane's £10,000 inheritance could be split between a PEP, a Tessa and a high-interest account

PHOTOGRAPH: JASON BYE

rate of 5.5 per cent for a 30-day account.

For the remainder, I recommend that she put £6,000 into a PEP and £2,000 into a Tessa.

If Diane is looking to invest her PEP in the UK, then the Swiss or Friends Provident will suit, and if she is looking to invest internationally, NPI and Jupiter fit the bill. As far as the Tessa is concerned, then Birmingham Mid-shires Inflation-Beater Tessa offers a guaranteed 3 per cent over the retail price index with a current rate of 6.5 per cent.

My recommendations will change if Diane can repay her loan without penalty. This will release £136 a month for further savings which she could use to top up a Tessa, for instance.

Given that she has indicated that she has additional sums available each month, I would recommend that after she has invested in a critical illness policy and a pension top-up, she should decide on a further sum to place in a PEP.

If, say, Diane chooses one PEP for this year, her monthly savings can be invested in another PEP to give her a spread of risk. The PEPs should be set aside for a five-year-plus period and Diane has indicated that this is the length of time she is looking to.

In summary, Diane has good provision but needs to keep up the discipline of savings. This will ensure that she has a comfortable future, irrespective of the uncertainties of life.

(Amanda Davidson's advice was given shortly before the end of the 1996-97 tax year, allowing Diane to take advantage of that year's tax allowance for her lump sum PEP investment.)

THE VERDICT: "I have taken up Amanda's advice on a number of issues. For instance, I am taking steps to pay off the Midland Bank loan and I have already made the lump-sum PEP investment. We were aware of the need to make wills and we have one in front of us right now, literally.

Amanda's advice sounded sensible and it made me want to act on it immediately."

If you want to take part in a financial makeover, please write to: Nic Cicuiti, "Free Financial Advice Offer", The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, enclosing a few brief details about yourself and a telephone number.

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\*Source: Morning Star. Based on £100 per month from 14.2.86 to 1.1.97. Offer to 18 years. With gross income of £10,000. Over the 5 years to 1.1.97 the same investment would have generated an average annual growth rate of 14.2%. The figures shown illustrate what the return would have been if the fund had been eligible for inclusion in a PEP as it launched in February 1986. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. The value of stockmarket investments and any income from them may fall as well as rise and investors may not get back the amount originally invested. Exchange rates change and the value of any tax advantages depends on personal circumstances. The 1% discount on monthly payments assumes charges at their current level. \*For PEPs effected by 31st June 1997. For your protection, your calls to Scottish Widows may be recorded or monitored.



TO FIND OUT WHAT'S ON TV, WHERE TO GO AND WHEN, READ TODAY'S eye

Serena Mackesy  
In my week

There are people who don't feel they're really alive unless they have a tragedy, and Marcella's one of them

Marcella is working herself up into a high old state of self-pity; not for the first time, and I'm sure not for the last. I love Marcella very much, but my affection often seems to express itself in the urge to wrap my hands round her throat and give her a rattling. Marcella is one of those people who create disasters as a way of filling the time, and then spend the subsequent months bawling the pants off the rest of us about how badly she's been treated. Life is never simple for Marcella. There are people who don't feel they're really alive unless they have a tragedy, and she's one of them.

I've spent the best part of 20 years listening to Marcella, through her time at drama school and her blossoming as a drama queen. Her world is an uncomfortable hybrid of Mills and Boon and Stephen King. There was the fixation on Leo, who's one of the straightest gay men in the universe, has never shown an iota of interest in women, though he led her on by paying for her meals, hugging her and letting her call him at three in the morning. She planted herself starkers in his bed one night, and now we can't ask them to the same things in case she throws a scene ("I felt so humiliated. You have no idea"). There were the three years of hysteria and monthly blood tests after she spent two condomless weeks with a hopeless – and very public – junkie ("but I loved him. You don't understand what it's like"). Everyone who's known her more than a year has had to turn out to the small hours to rescue her from some roadside because she's gone out without any money and had a row with her popsy ("These things never happen to you"). Imagination plays a large part in Marcella's life. Shame she can't put it to some lucrative use.

We're in one of those pretentious drinking clubs in Soho ("Would members please

remember to switch off mobile phones while on the premises"), being ignored by waiters while we cram into the corners of a pair of sofas. I've handed over her birthday present, an eggshell porcelain bowl, and she's said what a pity it is it'll get broken so quickly. I'm drinking red, Marcella is drinking mineral water and periodically clutching her stomach to remind me about the food poisoning she got from a lobster two weeks ago. Marcella has had more shellfish poisoning than Mickey Rooney's had wives.

This week, it's the birthday blues. She has spent the anniversary, she says, alone and desolate. "Well why," I ask, "didn't

you go to engineer another drama. She digs in her Harvey Nichols bag, pulls out a handkerchief, rubs the eye harder. I offer her some eye drops. She tosses her rich black hair several times, says something about catching my diseases and accepts them. Then "Aaah! Ooh! Aggh!" she doubles up, kicks the leg of the advertising executive next to her. "Oh, God, that hurts. That's agony. Aaah! I think I've scratched my eyeball!" I sit back, refusing to be drawn in. Marcella thrashes around a bit more. "What have you put in those?" "Darling, if you stop rubbing bits of mascara into it, it'll stop hurting."

She shrieks at this. "I have to get out of here." Flings herself from the sofa, reels through the room toward the loo, banging into every table she passes, covering her eyes to make it look as though she's crying. Everyone glances at cold-hearted old me. I down my drink and line up another.

Five minutes later she's back, looking pale but courageous. "You have no idea," she says, "how much that hurt. Why did you give me those things?" "I thought they might help, Marcella. You were making such a fuss." She clutches her stomach. "Oh, God," she says, "Oooh God!" I offer her a Rennie. "This is food poisoning, not indigestion!" she snaps. "If you've had food poisoning for two weeks, don't you think you should see a doctor?" She straightens up, says in a small voice: "I'll see how I feel in a day or so." Pulls another grimace of ill-treated agony.

There was a time when I would have congratulated Marcella on her bravery, patted her arm, but you get tired after a while. Or maybe it's the part of the maturing process: once you've seen some really awful things, the made-up ones make you impatient. "Humphph," I say. "Well, let me know if there's actually something wrong, won't you?"

Robert Hanks  
the week on radio

## Time to kill or be killed

Time was, time was a public commodity; most people would know what time it was by the firing of a noonday gun, or by looking at a clock on a church or a town hall or a jeweller's shop, or by hearing the night-watchman explain that it was two o'clock and all was well, if they ever did say that, which frankly I doubt. But with the mass-ownership of watches, time has been broken up, individualised: just as we all keep our own consciences now, instead of relying on the Church to distinguish good and evil for us, so we all keep our own time of day.

Of course, just as we need some common core of morality for society to function, so we need some shared notion of time, or we'd spend our lives missing appointments and finding that we hadn't videoed the last five minutes of favourite television programmes; so most people check their watches against public time-keeping every now and then to make sure they're roughly in line with

there's room for speculation as to how far we rely on timechecks to tell us the time, and how far we appreciate them as adding to the general breakfast-time sense of haste.

At other times of day, the time-check takes on a different role – it's there to impart a sense of immediacy. Hence, on Radio 4, you get time-checks during news programmes such as *PM* and *The World at One*, but not during other live programmes, such as *Kaleidoscope*. (I'm not sure if *The Afternoon Show* bothers with them; the fact that I haven't noticed is significant in itself.)

Time is not always an issue: not on Radio 3, with its long tradition – now, sadly, being stamped out – of refusing to take any notice of the clock. Not in plays and stories, either, blunting the flow of real time is one of the purposes of fiction.

An exception to that rule was *Thirty Minutes to Kill* (Radio 4, Tuesday), a brief comedy in real time by Lynne Truss. Michael Maloney and

Haydn Gwynne played a couple about to set out on holiday who suddenly find they have half an hour to spare. Truss used the time to examine contrasting attitudes to the clock: she is a compulsive worrier, insanely superstitious and fanatically punctual; he is seemingly more laid-back and unhurried, although it turns out that his apparent relaxation is at least partly a pose to torment her. Their battle of wills lasts a neat 30 minutes, as he runs baths, lets the cat out, goes down to the shops to buy milk – anything to delay the evil hour of departure; she, meanwhile, is rapidly losing her grip on sanity.

As the minutes tick by, and roles were (a little implausibly) reversed, you worried that the title might hold some sinister double meaning: a countdown to murder, perhaps. All in all, interesting as a play which oozed its own *raison d'être* – how could it matter that it was set in real time when you were too busy listening to check your watch?

## So it's vizsontlatastra from them

Gerry Adams embraced electoral triumph on the Friday with a speech delivered in Gaelic and English. A day later you realised where he got the idea from, when Carrie, *über*-presenter of the Eurovision Song Contest (BBC1, Sat), made part of her keynote welcome in Gaelic. It was either that or staggeringly bad Danish. (Although no worse, in fairness, than that of the Danish entrant himself, who sang a song about a man who falls in love with a telephone operator, delivered in the rapid idiom; sort of Hans Christian Muthafuckasoo.)

The co-presenter was that little blond leprechaun from BoyZone. He was so short he made Carrie, towering over him, look like a drag act. There was something too perfectly feminine about her, you kept on staring at her neck for signs of activity from an Adam's apple. Her real name's probably Fintan.

You wouldn't put anything past the latest instalment of Eurovision. The Icelandic entry was a notably frank paean to the joys of sadomasochism. The dancing girls, basically cootortionists, had done their shopping at Ann Summers. This being the show it was, and held in Ireland to boot, the camera sensibly kept its distance. Terry Wogan, who

in pursuit of the teenage crush note, there were at least three BoyZones entered, one of them a Hungarian outfit optimistically called VIP. Plus a couple of GirlZones, including a risible gaggle from Holland.

These days, of course, the entertainment is not so cheap. Like the Conservative Party, or Manchester United, Ireland had woo four out of the last five cootests. Yet again RTE blew most of its annual budget on production – this time, the punts were plunged into a gigantic blow-up of the set of *Blake's Seven*. To help foot the bill, they'd clearly rigged up some sort of funding arrangement with the Irish Tourist Board, who used the show as a four-hour advertisement with short musical breaks sewn in to let viewers go off and brew tea.

Ireland's yearly attempt to court failure has not been a success. Next year they could do worse than enter BoyZone, whose interval song was every bit as formless as the Swiss entry. Over the years, Britain, the only other country to Europe that knows about pop music, has been somewhat unneighbourly in this area, annually submitting hopelessly crooked entries. Bucks Fizz, our most recent victors, "won it in 1982," advised Wogan, "just after the Corn Laws were repealed". This year, for once, we sent over quite a good tub-

thumping anthem, and duly won by a (quantily) cobbled street.

The result seemed suitably in keeping with the new national mood. Britain has voted to rejoin Europe, and Europe welcomed us in as only Europe knows how. "Have one of these," Thanks. After an election where politicians struggled to deliver on the Vision Thing, here was the oest best Thing: the Eurovision Thing, a waffly philosophy of peace and harmonics.

And barriers are tumbling down all over the Continent. Whereas entrants used to sing in English or jibberish or a winning combination of both (ladies and gentlemen, a big hand for "Boom Bang a Bang"), they now abuse their own languages. Apart from Russia, that is, which fielded a well-preserved woman who didn't look a day over 60 singing a song called "Primadonna". The Italians, rather rudely, failed to reciprocate with a song called "Babushka".

It wasn't just the rapping Danes who plumped for an American genre. Norway unbundled itself of a song called "Sao Francisco", a charming if cheesy homage to the Beach Boys. It got nul points. The Eurovision Song Contest may be changing but, as they say in Murmansk, Rome wasn't built to a day.



## Whatever happened to? Eldorado

A new soap opera opens on 6 July, 1992 in a blaze of sunshine and publicity. *Eldorado*, the BBC's big gun in the lowest common denominator ratings battle with ITV has all the ingredients of successful soaps in the Eighties in one big frothy mix: escapism / a foreign location à la *Neighbours* / *Dynasty* and common people à la *EastEnders*. A sun, sex, sand and sangria soap set in a sizzling hot spot in sunny Spain. David Mellor, the Heritage minister soon to embark on a soap

opera of his own, questions whether it was "necessary to make, with the licence fee, a £10m village in Spain". It's more than just a programme, however – it's a symbol of what programmes BBC bosses think they should be making – ahead of the upcoming government BBC charter renewal.

The first episode draws 7.3m viewers. Within minutes, that's down to 6.5m; six weeks after launch, 2.8m. By the autumn

of 1992, it's a joke – literally. Nouvelle recycled toilet tissue is advertised with the line "In my previous life, I was an *Eldorado* script" and a haemorrhoid ointment claims "this makes even sitting through an episode of *Eldorado* tolerable".

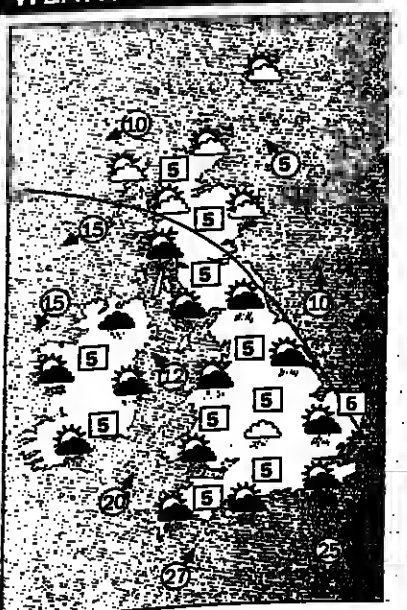
However, producer Corinne Hollingsworth takes over and with the new year the ratings start to rise: one episode involving a suicide gets 8m. She's backed by Members

of the Eldorado Appreciation Society Espana (TEASE) in Sussex who cite a *TV Times* survey with nine out of 10 readers in favour of retention.

Importantly, though, one person is out in favour: new BBC controller Alan Yentob. In July 1993, after 156 episodes, it's gone. So it's Dole-dorado for Julie Fernandez (the wheelchair-bound Vanessa Lockhead), signing on at a Job Centre in Ilford, Essex, while

Sandra Sandri (pouting Pilar) insists that "it was good experience to work in an English language programme". Franco Rey (Dr Fernandez) has put that experience to use, and currently holds down a translator's job on *The Cook Report*, chasing crooks to the Costa del Sol – "of which", in the words of a BBC spokesman, "there are many", but not apparently, despite the loss of £12m worth of licence fee, the Corporation itself. James Anneson

## WEATHER

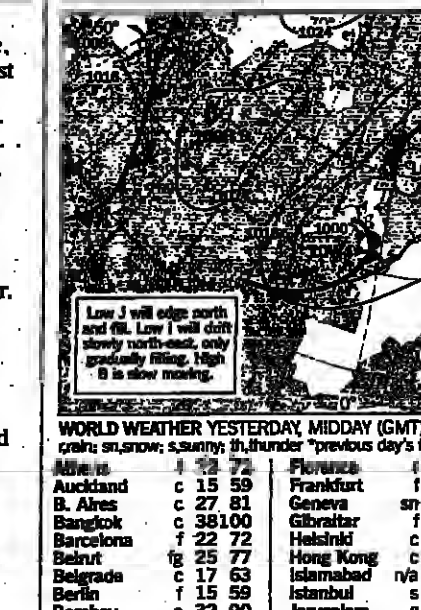


Northern and eastern regions of England should start bright with some early sunshine, but showers already over Wales and the West Country will become more widespread with longer spells of rain in places. Northern Ireland will be cool and rather cloudy with limited sunny spells and showery bursts of rain. Southern Scotland should have some sunshine this morning, but a few sharp showers are likely this afternoon. Meanwhile northern Scotland should have dry and fairly bright weather, with possibly the odd shower. Southern and eastern England will have a bright and breezy day tomorrow with sunny spells and a few passing showers. Wales and western England have a higher chance of catching some heavy showers, but there will also be some sunny breaks. Northern Ireland and Scotland will be quite cool with a lot of cloud and a scattering of heavy showers. During the first half of next week it will remain showery but there will be some reasonable spells of warm sunshine, especially in the south and east.

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Aberdeen	9-15	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Anglesey	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Cardiff	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Edinburgh	11-17	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Glasgow	11-17	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
London	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Manchester	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Newcastle	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Nottingham	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Oxford	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Plymouth	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Reading	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Sheffield	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Southampton	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
St Andrews	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Stirling	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Swansea	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Torquay	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Wrexham	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Manchester	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Newcastle	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Nottingham	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Oxford	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Plymouth	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Reading	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Sheffield	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Southampton	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
St Andrews	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Stirling	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Swansea	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Torquay	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Wrexham	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy

## Europe and The World



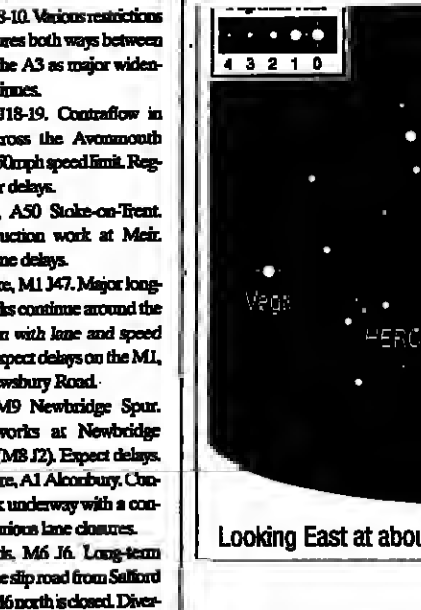
Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Manchester	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Newcastle	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Nottingham	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Oxford	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Plymouth	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Reading	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Sheffield	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Southampton	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
St Andrews	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Stirling	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Swansea	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Torquay	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Wrexham	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy

## AA Roadwatch

Surveys, M25 J8-10. Various restrictions and lane closures both ways between Reigate and the A3 as major widening work continues. Bristol, M5 J18-19. Contraflow in operation across the Avonmouth Bridge with a Stoph speed limit. Regular rush hour delays. Staffordshire, A50 Stoke-on-Trent. Major construction work at Melk. Long peak-time delays. West Yorkshire, M1 J47. Major long-term roadworks continue around the Leeds junction with lane and speed restrictions. Expect delays on the M1, M62 and Donway Road. Edinburgh, M9 Newbridge Spur. Major roadworks at Newbridge. Roadworks (M8 J2). Expect delays. Cambridge, A1 Alconbury. Construction work underway with a contraflow and various lane closures. West Midlands, M6 J6. Long-term roadworks – the sliproad from Salford Cross to the M6 road is closed. Diversions by Lichfield Road (A5127). All Leptonstone. Major roadworks on the Green Man roundabout.

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Manchester	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Newcastle	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Nottingham	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Oxford	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Plymouth	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Reading	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Sheffield	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Southampton	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
St Andrews	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Stirling	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Swansea	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Torquay	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy
Wrexham	12-18	W 10-15	Partly cloudy

## The Sky at Night



Two weeks ago, astronomers announced the latest discovery of a planet going round a star other than our Sun. The star is Rho Coronae Borealis, cowering in the northern crown, and it is said to have a planet comparable to Jupiter. The evidence for the planet is indirect. Not even the world's most powerful telescopes can actually see it. But its 5th magnitude parent, a Sun-like star lying 50 light years away, is just bright enough to be detectable with the naked eye in a dark sky.

## Sun and Moon

Sun rises 5:16am  
Sun sets 8:36pm  
Moon rises 8:20am  
Moon sets 12:09am  
Full Moon: May 22

The constellation Corona Borealis is currently well up over the eastern horizon as it gets dark. Small, and relatively faint, it is nevertheless rather easy to find because of its compact semi-circular shape. The brightest jewel in the crown is the second magnitude star now often appropriately called Gemma. Its traditional Arabic name though is Alphecca – 'the bright one of the dish'.

Jacqueline Mitton



**Gerard Gilbert** recommends **Jonathan Creek** Sat 8.10pm BBC1

*Jonathan Creek* stars Caroline Quentin, who, having unshackled herself from husband Paul Merton and the ghetto of *Men Behaving Badly* (where she plays the headless but pivotal role

A real-life mystery is posed by *The Works* documentary,

"You have to look as if you could work down a mine, as well as read Proust," was the advice given to the fledgling actor Sean Connery in the midst of *Scene by Scene with Sean Connery*.

Dancing for Dollars (San C4), about how an American businessman got himself into an awful lot of trouble when he tried importing the Bolshoi Ballet into Las Vegas, is written about by Louise Levene elsewhere in today's paper. Meanwhile, by Vietnam (San BB1) relates the extraordinary story of the Everyman (San BB1) relates the extraordinary story of the Vietnamese woman, Kim Phuc, whose life was changed forever by that Pulitzer Prize winning photograph from the Vietnam War of a napalm-scorched nine-year-old girl running screaming

## ITV/Regions

**1.35 Liar - Lie - The World's Greatest**  
and Fibbers (409470) 2.00 Films: The Amazing  
Journey Captain James Smith (8207768). 3.55 Quest  
Quest (8235300). 12.00 Film: Deadly Intentions.  
Again? (564879). 1.40 Film: Killer Instinct.  
Killer Instinct (816495). 4.30 - 5.30am Shift  
(70985).

**CENTRAL**  
As London except 1.20pm Central News and  
Weather (85068126). 1.25 Premieres (2234935).  
1.55 Cartoon Time (802427942). 2.20 Film: Bar-  
ney (8294311). 3.55 Quest Quest (5994381).  
5.00 Central News and Weather (5915381). 5.10  
The World of Wonder (4590671). 5.15 Deltis the Ec-  
ery (1829237). 4.05 Jodeler (7657169).  
5.20 - 5.30am Asian Eye (8168411).

**HITV WALES**  
As London except: 1.20pm HTV News  
(85068126). 1.25 Quest Quest (2647590). 2.20  
Film: Barney (8294311). 3.15 Films: Man With A  
Gun (11436039). 4.00 Wales News and  
Sports (11436039). 12.00 Films: Deadly In-  
tentions... Again? (564879). 1.40 Film: Killer In-  
stinct (816495). 3.20 Cool Vibes (49454904).  
3.45 Heiter Skelter (816495). 4.30 - 5.30am  
Shift (70985).

**HITV WEST**  
As Hitv Wales except: 1.20pm HITV News Update  
(85068126). 3.15 World of Wonder (1570567).  
3.35 Film: The Plank (6080854). 4.15 The List  
(7964687). 5.05 - 5.20pm HITV West News, Sports  
Results and Weather (8235300).

**MERIDIAN**  
As London except: 1.20pm Meridian News and  
Weather (85068126). 1.25 A460 (22349039).  
1.55 The Road Show (40805056). 3.55 Quest  
Quest (5994381). 5.05 Meridian News and Weath-  
er (8235300). 12.00 Film: Deadly Intentions.  
Again? (564879). 1.40 Film: Killer Instinct  
(816495). 3.20 Cool Vibes (49454904). 3.45 Heit-  
er Skelter (816495). 4.30 - 5.30am Shift  
(70985).

**WESTCOUNTRY**  
As London except: 1.20pm Westcountry News and  
Weather (85068126). 1.25 Birthday People (85067497).  
1.30 Film: Mister Ten Per Cent (29300). 3.00 Air  
Time (8190225). 3.55 Quest Quest (5994381).  
5.05 Westcountry News (8235300). 12.00 Film:  
Deadly Intentions... Again? (564879). 1.40 Film:  
Killer Instinct (816495). 3.20 Cool Vibes  
(49454904). 3.45 Heiter Skelter (816495). 4.30  
- 5.30am Shift (70985).

**YORKSHIRE**  
As London except: 1.20pm Calendar News and  
Weather (85068126). 1.25 Airtime (85067497).  
2.20 Film: You Know What Sides Are (879881).  
3.55 Quest Quest (5994381). 5.05 Yorkshire  
News and Weather (5915381). 5.10 Scoreline  
(4590671). 12.00 Film: Deadly Intentions.  
Again? (115527). 1.50 In Bed with Medians  
(8546121). 2.20 Film: The Doctor (824656).  
3.55 Quest Quest (5994381). 4.00 Collins  
and Macdonald's Movie Club (40192411). 4.35  
5.30 Murder, She Write (86892430).

**CHANNEL 3 NORTH EAST**  
As Yorkshire except: 1.20pm North East News  
(85068126). 5.05 North East News (5915381).  
5.10 Calendar (8003950). 5.15 - 5.20pm Score-  
line (5002861).

**SAC**  
As C4 except: 10.00am Yerry Pratchett's Jung-  
le Quest (89403). 10.30 The Monkey (81858).  
12.00 Film: Eight O'Clock Wally (824656). 3.55  
Film: Above Us The Sky (824656). 4.15 Film:  
The Silent Run Game (60491594). 6.30  
Singin' Along! 7.00 Newyddys a Chwarae  
(828774). 7.15 Lwyfan (439039). 7.45 Cen-  
tury Chan (532774). 8.20 Hel Strawn (55239).  
8.50 Pargelli (910671). 9.15 Film: Wedding  
Plans (824656). 9.30 Film: The Wedding  
on the Street (807687). 11.30 - 5.30am Let  
Blood Run Free (941659).

00 Amore! (606039). 3.50 The  
wer Within (189107). 5.30 Torn  
der Jerat The Movie (82478).

<p><b>GOOD FOOD GALORE</b></p> <p>Great Bank Holiday menus, classic Normandy dishes and irresistible golden-topped gratins are just some of over 80 mouth-watering recipes in our May issue.</p>	<p><b>GOOD FOOD ON AIR</b></p> <p>We follow Sophie Grigson's new series, <i>Taste of the Times</i>: we've the start of <i>MasterChef 1997</i>; and we've a guide to your favourite food programmes.</p>	<p><b>GOOD FOOD AND DRINK ADVICE</b></p> <p>Part Two of our wine course has more grape varieties and how to spot faults. And we steer you through food scares and conflicting advice on children's foods.</p>	<p><b>GOOD FOOD: NEVER GO WITHOUT IT</b></p> <p>You'll find an 8-page guide to the best food in New York; a chance to visit a dream kitchen; and more of <i>Ant &amp; Dec's Harriott's</i> collectable cook cards.</p>
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You'll find an 8-page guide to the best food in New York; a chance to win a dream kitchen; and more of Ainslie Harriott's collectable cook cards.